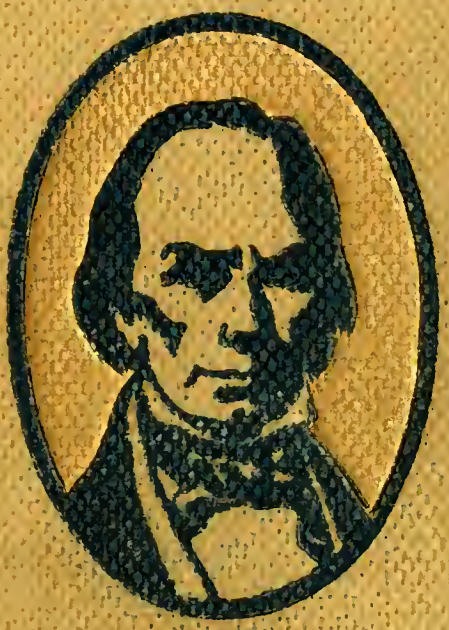
THE TRUE HENRY CLAY

BY

JOSEPH M. ROGERS



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HENRY CLAY IN MIDDLE LIFE

(From the painting by Dubourjal. This, though rare, is considered one of the most interesting portraits of the Statesman.)

The True Henry Clay

By

Joseph M. Rogers

With Twenty-four Illustrations

Philadelphia & London
J. B. Lippincott Company
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TO

MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER

WHOSE SERVICES TO KENTUCKY

IN THE CAUSE OF EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL

FREEDOM WOULD HAVE DELIGHTED

HENRY CLAY

HAD HE LIVED TO WITNESS

THEM

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(In 1902 lightning knocked off the head of the superimposed statue, and the Kentucky Legislature refused to make an appropriation to repair it. From a photograph taken for this volume.)

The True Henry Clay

❦ ❦ ❦

I

INTRODUCTION

HENRY CLAY is fast becoming a mythical personage. One of the most vigorous, certainly the most emotional, and one of the most influential of statesmen has been lost in a haze of misinformation ; befogged in a mist of fable and transformed by a sort of mental strabismus which has affected all his admirers. The Henry Clay of fiction, so artfully constructed, like the heroes of ancient mythology, is a distressing figure. Henry Clay was one of the most lovable men who ever lived, if not in all respects the most admirable. None knew him but to love him, though a majority would never vote for him.

There is no danger that Henry Clay will be forgotten. Every school-boy is familiar with the name. Every stump-speaker, no matter what his politics, constantly invokes him with an ignorance of his character and career that is sublimely ridiculous. Henry Clay will last forever ; but it is much to be feared that the survival will be a ghost, and not the full-blooded, true-hearted, impulsive, chivalrous, imperious Kentuckian.

An effort is made in this volume, by one who was born on Clay soil and reared in the best traditions of Kentucky, to tell the truth about Clay and his achievements and failures.

Here is no effort to analyze or explain, uphold or condemn Henry Clay in the light of present knowledge. Times have changed in a century, and we have changed. We must light the lamps of the past to get the proper light in which to read its pages. We commonly speak of Jefferson, of Webster, of Calhoun, and of many others by their last names; but it is always Henry Clay who comes in evidence. To omit his first name is to throw the hearer into confusion. Henry Clay is no longer a name, but an institution.

But there are fallacies to be cleared away.

It is generally assumed that he was the father of protection. In truth he was only a sort of step-father who at an important period gave his foster-child not only a scolding, but a drubbing which nearly resulted in death.

It is often assumed that he was the father of the sound-money doctrine because he was a fervent champion of the National Bank. As a matter of fact, he was wabbly on this subject, voting, as a rule, against Benton's specie standard, which is to-day the law of the land. His first great speech in the Senate was against the bank.

It is sometimes assumed that he was the real father of the law to give the settler on the public lands a free or very cheap title. In reality he was usually on the opposite side, demanding big prices, but offering the surplus as a largess to the States.

It is well known that he was the personal objurgator of slavery and politically opposed to its extension. The acts he fathered or originated show that he unconsciously helped extend the institution to which he was so conscientiously opposed. He was not always a moral hero, though a courageous man.

He is called the great compromiser or pacificator. Yet some of his measures were surrenders, and his

last great stand was simply the precursor of civil war, which was staved off until it became more deadly.

It can be said that at times Clay was on opposite sides of a number of very important questions. It is no longer proper to accuse a statesman of inconsistency because he changes his mind. Opportunism has become a fixed principle in practical politics, but in the first half of the nineteenth century it was not so highly esteemed, and certainly Clay ran the whole gamut and was himself the chief victim of his own vagaries.

The reason is not far to seek. While physically and mentally Clay was a great, strong man, temperamentally he was constituted like a woman. His instincts were, as a rule, unerring; his second thoughts were apt to be wrong. As soon as he began to argue with himself, consult personal or other interests, he became mentally and morally befogged. When he began to doubt, he was lost. Like a woman, he was warm-hearted, impulsive, self-sacrificing. As a man, he was deficient in that fundamental determination which is the mainstay of great character. When he might have given way without loss of prestige or principle, he was adamant; when he should have been firm, he relented, hesitated, and was lost. This characteristic was congenital, beyond his control. He had courage and often braved public opinion, but, unfortunately, in politics he could lay but not follow a direct course. Men of less caliber have come down in history with better reputations.

Notwithstanding all this, Clay is one of the most delightful studies,—a man for whom there is constant affection felt; and if his failings did not always lean to virtue's side, they were, as a rule, so bound up with human nature that he escaped censure where others less reprehensible were roundly scored.

In one respect Henry Clay was as fixed and con-

stant as the polar star. He loved the Union, never listened for a moment to any of the wiles or threats of disunionists, and in his last days threatened to go against Kentucky, much as he loved her and much as she had honored him, if at any time she attempted secession. It may well be believed that some of his legislation really encouraged the separatist propaganda, but that was not his intention. As a matter of fact, the dead bones of Henry Clay and his still living words of patriotism kept Kentucky in 1861–2 from going precipitately into secession. And that Kentucky stood firm was perhaps the most crucial event of all that long contest.

He was a very great man. We shall not soon look upon his like again.

Finally, though Clay is a household word, there is, perhaps, only one expression of his that has become fixed in the public mind: "I would rather be right than President" is made the constant theme of moral lectures, is quoted on all occasions. While Clay undoubtedly believed this statement when he made it, the truth is that he wanted to be President so badly that in this very campaign he said and did things which alienated from him the support of the most conscientious people in the land, and these cost him the election. This shows the strange intellectual and moral make-up of the man. Clay could not lie. He was as frank as possible. He was, however, an arch-deceiver; but he deceived only one person, and that was himself. Moreover, Henry Clay was the most lovable American that ever lived. That is a sufficient epitaph for any one. Those who love much are forgiven everything, and this has been the happy fate of Henry Clay.

II

YOUTH

HENRY CLAY was precocious. It was his misfortune to have blossomed too soon, to have achieved eminence at the time most young men are struggling for a hearing. In his whole career we can see how much misfortune he owed to defective education,—not only that of books, but of varied experience. Normally, a man must gain most that is valuable through hard knocks which he gets in competition with others. This sort of training gives him a perspective of life which is invaluable. It tends to conservatism, to make him consider well the opposition, so that he gets a sense of proportion which is fundamental in a well-rounded character.

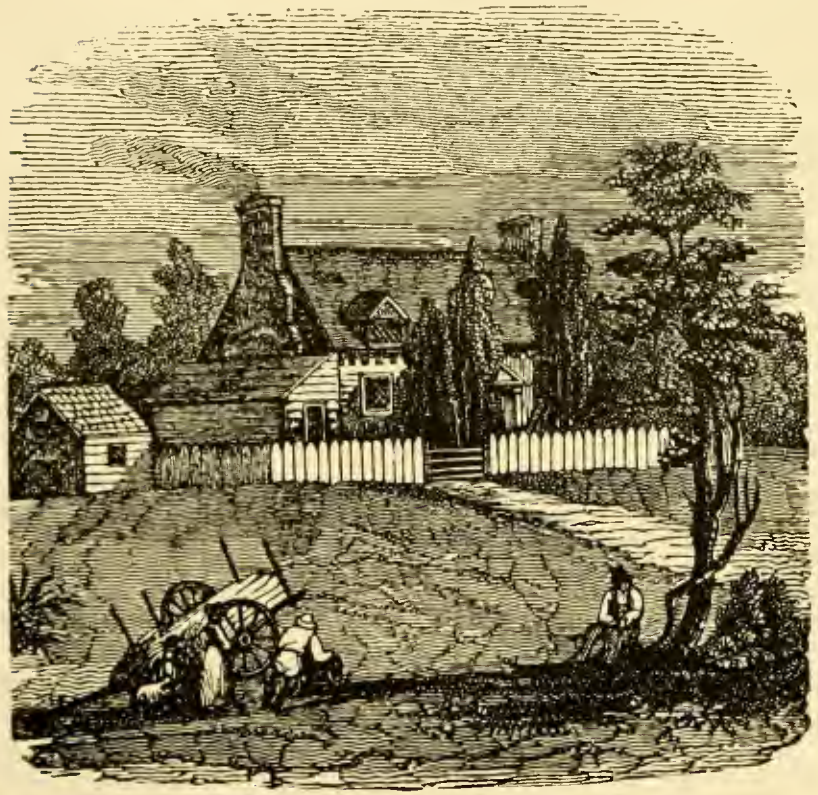
In these respects Clay was lamentably lacking. He achieved success so easily that he quite misunderstood others and overestimated himself. His defeats came too late in life. They chastened him, disheartened him for a time, but never taught him. The rebound always came, and the buoyancy of hope carried him along each time until victory was in his grasp, when, as usual, it faded away. From youth to age he was alternately on the heights of exhilaration or in the depths of despair. Nature had lavished her gifts upon him, but he often failed to make proper use of them.

His title of the "Mill Boy of the Slashes" came from the fact that he was born in a section of Hanover County, Virginia, known as "The Slashes." Of his ancestry little is known, except that his family

had settled on the James in early times. Clay never believed in the ancestral tables provided by superserviceable admirers which would have given him forbears of rank in the old country. He would have cared little could they have been established. Clay was ambitious to be notable as an ancestor and not as a descendant. His father, John Clay, was a Baptist clergyman with a wide reputation as an eloquent preacher, who died when Henry was four years old.

The official date of Henry's birth is given as April 12, 1777, but it is interesting to know that late in his career, when past threescore and ten, but still ambitious of the Presidency, his opponents tried to show that he was born in 1775. Even Horace Greeley seems to have been impressed with the evidence. There was a Henry born in 1775, who died, and the future statesman took his name. The widow Clay soon married Captain Henry Watkins, of Richmond, bringing him seven encumbrances, of whom Henry was the fifth. To Watkins's credit be it said, he was as nearly as possible all a natural father could have been. At The Slashes Henry had received a meagre education while assisting his mother as best he could. The fact that he used occasionally to take "a turn of meal" to the grist-mill, as has nearly every country boy in the South, was the sole basis for the term applied to him in political campaigns to rouse popular enthusiasms, though never with success.

At fourteen Henry was put to clerking in a store in Richmond, whither the family had removed. Stories are told of his willingness to do his duty, though the work was distasteful to him. Once he was reproved by the storekeeper for wasting too much string. Thereafter he saved every scrap he could get and tied the pieces together. Again, it was explained that using this sort of string might be offensive to the



BIRTHPLACE OF HENRY CLAY

(This was burned down about a century ago. It was typical of the period when slave cabins adjoined the family "mansion." From an old print.)

SCHOOL-HOUSE OF "THE SLASHES"

(Here Henry Clay received his elementary education which was practically all he ever received in any school. It is reported that, according to rule, Clay received his share of the traditional birching. From an old print.)

customers, as it made the packages look untidy, by reason of so many knots. So he consulted with a sailor at Richmond, who showed him how to splice strings in a way that knots were not shown. From that time he spent his leisure hours making short strings of the same size into a continuous cord. When his employer discovered this, he was so much pleased that he had all strings saved and turned the task of splicing them over to young Henry, with the result that his enthusiasm rapidly evaporated.

Although bashful as a youth, Clay is said to have been a favorite with the girls. While clerking in Richmond, he went to a party of young people where there was a good deal of reserve and stiffness until some one discovered that in a corner where Clay was the boys were having a good time. Then the girls interfered, the bashful Henry was pulled out of a corner, and he was compelled to take the lead. Kissing games were the common recreation of the time, and Copenhagen was proposed by Henry as a means of breaking up the gloom which had settled over the crowd. After this there was mirth enough, and although Henry was freckled and poorly clad, it is said that in the various games which followed he was chosen by the lassies to be kissed more often than any other boy in the place. That portion of the story which goes on to say that the youthful John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, was a guest, and that he was embittered over Clay's popularity, is evidently manufactured, but it is an instance of the sort of story that gained currency more than sixty years ago.

Finally, Clay was taken from behind the counter by his step-father, who realized that he had larger capacities than he had at first thought. He got him a small clerkship in the High Court of Chancery, where he had little to do and no salary, but a chance

to learn. Here he attracted the attention of the famous Chancellor George Wythe, who made him his amanuensis in the office where Jefferson and Marshall had studied. Here he picked up a good deal of useful education, if he did not actually fit himself for the law. After four years' service with Chancellor Wythe, Henry commenced the study of law on his own account with Attorney-General Brooke, and in one year was licensed to practise. Richmond was no place for a young lawyer, and so Henry went to Lexington, Kentucky, in 1797, near which his mother and step-father had lived for five years. It was the most thriving city in the West.

At twenty, Clay was tall, slender, white-headed, and hopeful. He had already achieved some notoriety as a debater, but his voice was not under good control. He is said to have been a model young man for that period, when standards were not the same as now. He drank some, gambled a good deal, and was quick in choler, ready to draw his blade. These, however, so far from being considered vices, were looked upon as the marks of a gentleman.

We can well imagine that under any circumstances Clay would have made his mark. It is possible that it would have been a more shining one elsewhere, but it never could have been the same as it was in Kentucky. He arrived at the precise time when the young Commonwealth was growing rapidly, needed vigorous blood, and was willing to appreciate it. And, at the risk of a seeming diversion, some attention must be paid to the Kentucky of that day, or else the career of Clay will never be understood. Psychologically and politically he was as much a development of Kentucky soil as were physically her fat cattle and race-horses.

Permanent settlement had been made in Kentucky only twenty-three years when Henry Clay moved to Lexington, and she had been a Commonwealth but five. Her career had been singular. When Daniel Boone and others pierced the Alleghenies they found what is now Kentucky uninhabited by Indians, though roving bands often hunted and fought there. The central portion contains the richest soil to be found in all of North America. Its mineral resources were great, but these were of less attraction to the Virginian than the cultivable area.

By this time Virginia had been largely absorbed by great plantations where slaves exhausted the soil in producing tobacco. The rush to the new country was stopped by the war of the Revolution, but after that period thousands of the veterans hurried to the Western lands. Virginians were almost exclusively of British stock and agricultural in their pursuits. They came, as a rule, from the counties where learning was little esteemed, but hunting, horse-racing, and carousing were much in vogue. Largely of cavalier extraction, they had two notable qualities, —an outward respect for religion and a decided adherence to the letter of the written law. The latter was a notable feature, in spite of the reckless and daring independence of the individual. There soon came a strong admixture of Scotch-Irish by way of Pennsylvania, which was of great importance to the State. After the better lands were taken up, Scotch and English settled in the eastern or mountainous region, where the race remains in a state of arrested development until this day. The Kentucky feuds are nothing but the internecine wars of the Highland clans transferred from Scotland to the Cumberland Mountains.

The central portion of Kentucky, known as the Blue Grass district, where Clay made his home, has

achieved a world-wide reputation. The soil is only about two feet deep, and overlies the crumbling measures of the Lower Silurian strata. Through these soft limestones the water percolates and constantly refreshes the soil. There are fields in this district where the same crop has been raised for one hundred years without the use of artificial fertilizers and apparently as rich as ever. Beginning in 1783, the Virginians rushed to Kentucky,—old soldiers, impoverished planters, adventurers, and cadets of the old families. The early settlers had struggles with the Indians, but Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers, in which Kentuckians took a leading part, brought the aborigines to terms. In 1790 there were 73,677 people in Kentucky, including 12,430 slaves and 114 free blacks. In 1800 there were 221,955, including 40,343 slaves and 737 free blacks. This was an extraordinary development for those times. As early as 1784 the Kentuckians moved for separate political government, but, owing to mild conditions imposed by Virginia and some extraordinary local situations, this was not effected until 1792. In the mean time Wilkinson had been coquetting with Spain, and Kentucky, then as far removed in time from Richmond as is the Seward Peninsula of Alaska today from Washington, was thinking more of the lower Mississippi trade than of the East. There were some who wanted to declare independence and a few who dreamed of a connection with Spain, which controlled the mouth of the river. This disappeared in time, but soon after her admission Kentucky passed the celebrated resolutions of 1798, which showed how lightly she construed the Federal bond,—at least on paper. At the same time it showed her audacious spirit, being the baby of the Union instructing the entire family.

Of the Kentuckians at the close of the eighteenth

century, Professor N. S. Shaler, in his history of the State, has written,—

"Twenty years of such life developed a particular sort of man. They had a very peculiar quality of mind. Its most characteristic feature was a certain dauntlessness, a habit of asserting the independence of all control except that of the written law. Their speech was rude and often exaggerated. As a class, they were much like the men of to-day in the Rocky Mountains, except that they had not the eager desire for gain that takes away from the charm of that people. This advantage made the frontiersman of Kentucky a much more agreeable fellow than his money-seeking modern kinsman from the far West. First we may notice their envious respect for the written law. Courts of Justice were at the outset established in Kentucky and the life was at once adjusted to the usages of the civil law."

An impetuous race with a tendency to break the law and yet to respect its mandates was good soil for a lawyer. Moreover, from the first the land laws of Kentucky were inadequate, and titles became involved in almost inextricable confusion. In the haste to settle, few adequate surveys were made, and claims overlapped one another in lavish profusion, giving rise to endless and expensive litigation.

The opportunities for a young lawyer of abilities in this growing section were better than in any other part of the country, and from the start Clay made his mark. In a chapter dealing with his career as a lawyer this subject will be more fully examined. For the present it is sufficient to say that he started in to work at twenty years of age with enthusiasm and the noble ambition of securing a practice worth four hundred dollars a year. Finding his voice defective, he spent days arguing to pigs and cows until he modulated it into those silvery, siren tones which seduced all hearers. In later years Clay was wont to say that the brutes of the farm were the best audiences he ever had. At least they never applauded him and

then voted for his rival. But Clay had something better than a good voice,—a magnetism of speech and manner when warmed by a favorite subject. As a Virginia boy his mind had been inflamed with the stories of Daniel Boone in Kentucky. When he came to reside there he was called upon to make a speech before some of the mountaineers in the country south of Lexington, where he had been sent to collect a bill which was resisted. In that region the blacksmith-shops were the centres of public gatherings, and here, most unfortunately, he had failed to secure from one of the vicinage payment of the money he had been sent to collect. A campaign was in progress, and Clay was asked to speak. It so happened that he knew nothing of the merits of the contest, which was purely local, and he could not find out on which side stood the man from whom he had unavailingly tried to get the money. In this dilemma he bethought himself of Daniel Boone, who was the patron saint of the neighborhood, and in an hour's impassioned speech from an anvil told of his early sufferings, sacrifices, and battles with the Indians, drawing largely on his imagination for the facts which he never knew or had forgotten. As a result, he was received with tumultuous applause by friends of both claimants for office, who thought he was on their side, and in the end got the money he was sent to collect.

Much of his work consisted of the copying of documents. Among these were many British opinions. Recollection of these proved useful to him later. He is said in the early years to have been called upon to defend before a Kentucky magistrate of little learning a man charged with the larceny of a hog. The evidence was dead against his client, and Clay proceeded to befog the local Dogberry as best he could by means of his eloquence. He quoted at great length a decision of an English chancellor in a

case dealing with a contested will, and insisted so fervently on its application to the case in hand that his client was released.

When copying manuscripts for Chancellor Wythe he was occasionally given extracts in Greek to reproduce. This was a difficult task, as he had never studied the language; but he kept at it until he received much praise. In after-years it is related that, being at a loss in an English drawing-room for a subject of conversation, he ventured something about the Greeks who were then struggling for their liberties. Discovering that none of those present was familiar with the Hellenic classics, he ventured to quote as a saying of Homer a few phrases which he had copied in youth and still remembered. This gave him a reputation for erudition that produced an offer of an introduction to Lord Byron, which, fortunately, never came to anything.

An incident of his first year in Kentucky is suggestive. In a debating society to which Clay belonged, the discussion being apparently ended, the chairman was about to put the question, according to custom, to decide which side of the proposition had been best maintained. Clay remarked in a whisper to a friend that the subject did not seem to have been exhausted, and was promptly called upon to speak. He replied in a hesitating, halting voice for a time, in which he constantly invoked the "gentlemen of the jury," and frequent smiles resulted. Then, gathering courage, he launched forth into an eloquent extemporaneous speech which carried his hearers away with enthusiasm. It was not the matter so much as the manner that captured his audience, and this was destined to be true of most of his speeches through life. They never smelled of the lamp, but were spontaneous outpourings of an impassioned, sentimental, imaginative soul. Indeed,

emotion was the very core of his being. Many of his convictions could be traced to some nervous impression.

His hatred of slavery as an institution is said to have originated in an experience when he lived in The Slashes. A negro who had run away from some distance had made his home in the swamps near by, and was a great favorite with all the boys in the neighborhood because he knew where the best fish were to be found, the first berries, and the finest "fox-grapes." News of his location coming to his master, a constable was sent to bring him back. The negro gave battle, in which he was accidentally killed. Clay never forgot this. He never forgot that the love of liberty is inherent in human nature, regardless of the color of the skin, though he was often doubtful as to what should be done with the institution.

In the month he became twenty-two years of age his worldly prosperity was such that he was married to Lucretia Hart, who became the mother of eleven children, and with whom he lived in happiness over fifty years. She was of good family, well educated for her times, and a constant help-meet to her husband during his whole career. She cared little for politics, but sympathized in her husband's ambitions. By her many descendants she is all but worshipped. In a few years he bought the beautiful estate, just outside of Lexington, which from the native trees he called Ashland, and when the fever of ambition was not in his blood he loved to be there, and his interest in its development and improvement was perhaps the best passion of his life.

He was not destined to see much of it. From his twenty-fifth to his seventy-sixth year most of his time was spent in the public service, and, but for his friends, Ashland would have passed into the hands

of strangers. Money and political success up to a certain point came so easily to him that he could not believe they had any limitations, yet much of his life he was harassed with debt contracted for others, while his ambition received numerous rude checks.

Clay was fond of the country, and in after-years used to refer to his ploughing, in which he considered himself an adept. Like every country boy, he was fond of swimming, and was accustomed to bathe frequently in a stream which bordered the farm. He had often told his children of his prowess in swimming several times across that stream, as if it were a remarkable feat. He never visited his old home after boyhood until he had become a national statesman. The thing that impressed him most was to see how the stream had shrunk from the very considerable river of his imagination to an insignificant little creek. This affected him considerably, and he was often wont to refer to it as showing the futility of trusting to memory.

Eleven children were born to them, most of whom reached maturity.

Henrietta, the oldest child, died in infancy.

Theodore Wythe, the oldest son, was injured in youth and was insane the rest of his life, dying at an advanced age in an asylum.

Thomas Hart became a farmer. He had five children, and many of his descendants are living, married into the best families of Kentucky.

Susan Hart died in early married life, leaving two sons, who died unmarried.

Ann Brown, who married a Mr. Erwin, was the favorite daughter and perhaps the favorite child of the statesman. "She was my comfort," he used to say, and when she died, in early married life, the blow almost killed him.

Lucretia Hart died early.

Henry Clay, Jr., the most promising of the sons in the line of public life, graduated from West Point, but settled down to the study of the law. He was lieutenant-colonel of the Second Kentucky Volunteers in the Mexican War, and was killed at Buena Vista while leading his troops.

Eliza died at the age of twelve, while the family was on the way to Washington. She was buried in Ohio, and only recently the body was removed to the family lot in Lexington.

Laura died in infancy.

James B. became a planter and lawyer, served in Congress, and after going South at the opening of the war, died in Canada. His widow survives.

John M. took charge of the horse-breeding at Ashland and was left part of the estate, on which his widow still resides.

It will be noted that all of Clay's daughters died comparatively young and only three sons survived the father. There are, however, many descendants of the third, fourth, and fifth generations still living, though a number were killed on both sides in the Civil War.

Although Clay had no confidence in the family tree erected by his relative, General Cassius M. Clay, it may be worth while mentioning that the claim was made that Sir Walter Raleigh sent over to Jamestown three sons of Sir John Clay, a Welshman, who gave each of the boys ten thousand pounds. From one of these (Charles) Cassius claimed to be descended; from Thomas, Henry the statesman descended; while the third brother, Henry, does not appear to have left any descendants. Unfortunately, this story is more or less apocryphal, and the member of the family who has, perhaps, studied the subject closer than any other considers it a

MRS. HENRY CLAY

(From a portrait painted by Oliver Frazer in the possession of Mrs. Henry C. McDowell, a granddaughter of Mrs. Clay. The portrait was an unfinished one, and discovered after the death of the painter. It is believed to have been painted about 1851, in which year Mr. Frazer also painted a portrait of Mr. Clay. The delicacy of outline of the face and the sensitiveness of the lips and eyes would indicate that Mrs. Clay was at this time a woman of considerable charm of appearance. Copyright, 1897, by the S. S. McClure Company. By courtesy of "McClure's Magazine.")

doubtful one, as resting on tradition and not on documentary evidence.

During much of Clay's mature years he was absent from home either in the practice of the law or on public business. Mrs. Clay seldom went to Washington. She had no taste for public life and the farm made great demands on her time. She was very close to Solomon's description of the virtuous woman. The estate was large and the slaves numerous. She superintended every operation. She arose first in the morning and was the last to retire. Her dairy supplied the famous Phœnix Hotel at Lexington, and she personally inspected every shipment of milk, eggs, poultry, and vegetables. She made the farm pay when her husband did not use up all the surplus in entertaining. On leaving for Washington, he always gave her a generous check for expenses, which she as regularly gave back to him on his return. She was said to be the best farmer in Fayette County; he the next best. Henry Clay had all the Virginian's love of rural life. He liked blooded stock, and spent large sums on his herds and flocks, which were remunerative. Easy come and easy go was Clay's motto. When he ran in debt, he could get clients easily enough to reach good financial circumstances.

As they grew older, Mr. and Mrs. Clay seemed to increase in affection towards each other. Could the demon of ambition have kept away, the last half of Clay's life would have been one of singular success and happiness. When at Ashland he seemed to forget the turmoil of politics and to revel in the bucolic life, but never for long at a time. His wife survived him for over a dozen years, and now lies by his side in a marble sarcophagus in the crypt of the Lexington monument erected by the State that knew and loved him so well.

III

CLAY AS A LAWYER

At the end of the eighteenth century the practice of the law was a less complex occupation than at present. The corpus of corporation law had not then arisen ; statute law was less important than the common law, which was borrowed from England. Nevertheless, it was a profession calling for the deepest study and the highest talents, and the difference between the pettifogger and the man at the head of the profession was as great then as now. Clay had been well trained under Wythe, Brooke, and other leading lawyers of Virginia, but his natural equipment exceeded his learning. He came at a fortunate time with letters from the best men of Richmond to the best in Lexington, where the bar, even in that early day, was noted for its ability. He seems to have owed much to the patronage of John Breckinridge, progenitor of a numerous and distinguished posterity.

Breckinridge received the young man cordially, and when he soon retired from the bar to enter politics, Clay succeeded to much of his practice. Nicholas, another leader of the bar, soon retired, as did one or two others, so that the young man leaped into a good practice after a single year, which he devoted to further study. He was an ardent Jeffersonian who could make a good speech on any occasion at a time when the Kentuckians were as anxious as ever were the Athenians to hear a good orator. In his earlier years most of his practice was in criminal cases before juries, and it soon appeared that he had

a wonderful power of persuasion. The writer has looked through the files of the courts at Lexington for many years, and finds that Clay had an enormous proportion of the practice, both civil and criminal. As was the custom, he went on circuit, where he was equally popular and successful. A specimen of one of his law papers about this time is reproduced in this volume, which shows that he wrote a beautiful hand, and the papers are as easily read to-day as when written. Most documents of that day are written in a heavy hand, but Clay preferred a light quill, and in later years raised geese and had his pens manufactured under his own eye.

After he had acquired a very considerable reputation, he had an experience that he never forgot, and it is spoken of to-day in Lexington by those who had it from his own lips. Going on circuit in company with other lawyers, he approached the neighboring county-seat of Mount Sterling, where, at a creek crossing, as was customary, all litigants met the cavalcade to select attorneys and get instructions. On this occasion Clay was singled out by the richest and most prominent citizen of the town, who, with great show of indignation, informed Clay that he had been accused of stealing a bee-gum by his next-door neighbor, and wanted Clay to defend him in what was no less than an atrocious assault on his character.

Clay asked for the witnesses who usually assembled on such occasions, and, there being none present, he was sent post-haste by the lawyer to get them and repair to the court-house. (It should be noted that a bee-gum is the colloquial name of bee-hive, due to the fact that sections of the hollow gum-tree were commonly used for the purpose. Kentuckians then, as ever since, were proverbially fond of honey, and a theft of the sort was an invasion of the most sacred rights of personal property.) When the case was

called, Clay was embarrassed to find that his client had collected no witnesses, some excuse being given. A strong case was made out against the man by witnesses for the prosecution, nor could cross-questioning shake their testimony. Clay's anger was rising, for he detested not only losing a case, but being imposed upon. He had to rely on his skill with the jury, and he launched forth into an eloquent plea in which the character and reputation of the man were held up in glowing colors and the absurdity shown that he should steal a bee-gum. All in vain. The silver tongue could not move the twelve men good and true, and when they retired, Clay was in a state of anger which reached blood-heat when the jury returned in five minutes with a verdict of guilty. He rose from his chair and stalked out of the room to give vent to his feelings. Just as he was passing out of the door his client seized him by the coat-tails and said, in great agitation,—

"Mr. Clay! Mr. Clay! we've lost our case!"

Clay turned around and, in a voice of indignation which thundered all over the room, announced,—

"Yes, Mr. B——, we've lost our case, but, by God, we've got our bee-gum!"

Another instance had a happier result. In those days, as now, lawyers were not above finding out all that was possible about the jury in advance, so as to work on them in turn. In an important case which he was trying, Clay found he had succeeded in winning over eleven men of the jury, but the twelfth was obdurate. Every one of his arts was tried in vain upon the twelfth man, a sturdy old farmer who had evidently made up his mind and was not to be moved. Finally he began an impassioned passage, and in the very midst of his eloquence suddenly stopped and, pointing his graceful finger at the obdurate juryman, said,—

"Mr. X——, a pinch of snuff, if you please."

The old man was overcome with the attention paid him by the distinguished lawyer, and finally managed to blurt out,—

"I don't snuff, Mr. Clay, but I chaws."

The twelve men were unanimous in their verdict.

The last great criminal case in which Clay figured was the Shelby murder case in 1848, when he was past seventy years old. It was an affair which stirred all Kentucky because the accused was a grandson of Governor Isaac Shelby, who had been a friend and patron of Clay. Young Shelby had been drinking hard and was dining at the famous Phœnix Hotel. Opposite him sat a friend named Horine. In a drunken frenzy, Shelby followed his friend out of the room and said,—

"What did you look at me for?"

"I might as well look at you as any one else," said Horine, whereupon Shelby shot him dead.

Nothing but the prominence of the family of Shelby saved him from immediate conviction, but the services of Clay were invoked to save the life of so unworthy a descendant of such an illustrious ancestor. There are still old men living in Lexington who heard that case tried. The evidence was perfectly plain and was quickly over, almost no defence being offered. It was Clay's last address to a jury in a murder trial, probably his last to any jury, and he girded his loins for the task. Witnesses say that it was worth as much to see the grand old man as to hear him. He never lost his dignity, but the fire of youth was upon him, and his tall form swayed back and forth and he thrilled with emotion as he offered such defence as he could for the atrocious deed. His silver voice never sounded sweeter, and every one of the audience was in tears. When he became excited there was

a gleam of fire in his eyes which one man said reminded him of a catamount in a cave. The speech was more of a defence of the Shelby family and a laudation of its services to the State than an apology for the crime, but it succeeded. The jury disagreed; the young man was admitted to bail and fled to Texas.

It was in this same court-house that, years before, an exciting incident took place. A turnkey was murdered by an inmate of the jail. A mob arose, took the murderer out, and was proceeding to hang him from a tree, when some one suggested that a more appropriate gallows would be the windows of the court-house. Accordingly he was taken up and swung out of a window of the court-room in the second story, "to make it more legal," as one of the leaders remarked.

That Clay was a great lawyer has been denied by those who think he never could have mastered the law, seeing that he spent relatively so little time in practise. That opinion is not held by those who have studied this feature of his career. He was a constitutional as well as a *nisi prius* lawyer, and argued many great cases in the Supreme and lesser courts. The so-called "Occupier Case," involving the relative rights of two independent States, in a controversy between Kentucky and Virginia, was argued by him in the Supreme Court; and, though he lost his case, the dissenting opinion closely followed his pleadings, and is now, perhaps, more esteemed than the decision itself.

In the banking controversy which so greatly convulsed the State of Kentucky he was counsel in many cases, and was for some years counsel of the National Bank, in which capacity he conducted some very intricate cases with success. There never was a time when he lacked clients, and if he had been

ORIGINAL COURT-HOUSE, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

(Here Henry Clay made his first reputation as a lawyer. From the second-story window a lynching took place.)

willing to confine himself to the law, he would have become one of the wealthiest men in the West, certainly one of the wealthiest lawyers in the country. In 1845 it was estimated that he should have been a millionaire if he had let politics alone, though perhaps there was not then a man west of the Alleghenies so rated. After 1810 very little of his time was given to practice. He lived freely, frequently signed notes for friends, which he often had to pay, and occasionally, for this reason only, was in debt. At such times all he had to do was to let it be known that he was open for clients and they flocked to him. In the last Monroe administration he left Congress to recover his fortune, and easily did so in a couple of years at the bar. He did not, however, love money for its own sake, or he would have been wealthy, even with the attention he paid to politics. A very large part of his practice was gratis, and his fees were moderate, even for those days.

After his retirement from the Senate in 1842 he did not practise a great deal. His debts, incurred in an unfortunate enterprise elsewhere mentioned, were paid by unknown friends, and he was soon able to regain his fortune so that he could live at Ashland in peace, only appearing at the bar in great cases or arguing in the Supreme Courts of the States or of the United States. A case has been mentioned which was probably the last. Not long before this he was induced to appear in defence of his kinsman and neighbor, General Cassius M. Clay, who lived for nearly sixty years after the event now narrated. At a barbecue at Russell's Cave a visitor by the name of Sam Brown was looking for trouble and soon found it. He brutally insulted General Clay, who resented it and was promptly shot at, but the bullet struck a dirk which General Clay carried. Clay pulled the knife and, closing in on Brown, carved

him to pieces in the fashion of the day, though he miraculously escaped death, for Cassius was "a bad man with the knife." In the trial that followed the prosecutor, who was a young man, naturally felt abashed at meeting such a distinguished opponent as Senator Clay, who defended Cassius. It was a notable trial, for the prosecutor wanted to win his spurs. After a speech which was in his best vein, Henry closed with the statement, "If Cassius Clay had not done as he did, I would not own him for a kinsman."

Cassius was acquitted; but fate was against Brown, who was soon afterwards killed in a steamboat explosion.

So far as can be learned from the records and uniform tradition, no man was ever hanged whom Henry Clay defended, and his reputation as such was so great that it is probable that the fact that Clay could be secured for the defence was a moving factor in preventing men from restraining their hatred. Clay seems to have felt the same, for he is reported to have said of one client whom he had successfully defended that he feared he had done society a great injustice in cheating the gallows of such as he. While acting for a brief period as prosecutor, he secured the death penalty for a negro, the only case of the sort he was ever connected with. The Phelps case is one that has become famous because it seems to have been the first in which the plea of emotional insanity was successfully set up as a defence. Mrs. Phelps, who was the wife of a well-to-do farmer, had, in a fit of jealousy, murdered her sister-in-law. Clay's defence was that of "temporary delirium," the point being that the woman had been wrought up to a state of irresponsibility which had been relieved the moment her revenge had been accomplished. The jury took this view so far as to save her life, but sent her to jail for a few months,

which, as has since been often observed, is inconsistent with the theory of Mr. Clay, though the result was unquestionably satisfactory to him.

Another notable case was his defence of an atrocious murderer named Willis. At the first trial Clay succeeded in hanging the jury. On the second trial he set up the defence that the defendant, having once been put in jeopardy of his life, could not, under the Constitution, be tried again. The judge refused to make such a ruling, as it was in violation of every precedent, and Clay indignantly threw down his briefs and left the room, declaring he could not stay in a court where the rights of his clients were not protected constitutionally. Of course this was purely theatrical, for none knew better than Clay that such a position was untenable. But the judge thought Clay really believed such was the law, sent a messenger for him, and induced him to continue the defence. The jury was more pliable in regard to this new interpretation of the Constitution, and Clay fairly hypnotized them into thinking the man had been tried once and could not now be convicted, so a verdict of not guilty was brought in.

In his early years Clay's greatest practice was among clients who could not pay a cent, and this at a time when the paying portion was large. He never refused his services to any one, and was always ready to defend free negroes and slaves, who were then accorded jury trials. In this he showed a courage and a defiance of public sentiment which were notable all his life long; but in the end it increased his popularity, for such characteristics never fail to attract the public, if they are manifested and maintained in good faith. Much of his practice dealt with land titles, and in this technical sort of litigation he achieved some notable successes which added materially to his fortune.

It has been said that success came too easy to Clay; that it would have been better for him had he been obliged to work harder to accomplish things. If by this is understood that it would probably have made him a more substantial and successful statesman, especially as regards the Presidency, the observation is probably correct. But that would have meant an entirely different sort of Henry Clay; not the spontaneous, imperious, lovable Clay that we know, to whom the Presidency could not have added a single laurel, and which might have brought him only pain and disappointment.

It is not, however, to be inferred that Clay was no student. He worked hard at his cases, but depended less for success upon precedents dug up from musty tomes than upon general principles of equity. Of course, at a time when the common law, which is supposed to be the epitome of common sense, ruled most cases, this was easier than at present; but even in this day Clay would have been a great genius at the bar. He depended upon certain well-fixed principles for most of his success, and in analysis and conception of principles applicable he was a genius. It certainly was not alone because "he had the gift o' gab wery gallopin'" that he made such a success at the bar; it was because he was fundamentally a great lawyer and tactically a great barrister.

The one experience at the bar that Clay always regretted was his appearance as counsel for Burr when he was arrested, charged with treason. Clay was reluctant to appear, and would not do so until Burr had given his written assurance that he had not only performed no act of treason, but had meditated none. Then he appeared for him, but later discovered the truth, and wrote bitterly that he had been deceived. Many years later Burr met him in New York and offered his hand, which Clay declined, placing his

hand in his waistcoat. Burr then asked whether he might not call, and an appointment was made, but Burr failed to keep it.

During his first term in the Legislature, Clay opposed and prevented the passage of a silly bill which had for its purpose the wiping out of all British decisions as precedents in local courts. He defended the common law and British jurists at a time when hatred of all things British was common,—almost compulsory in a public man.

IV

CLAY AS A FARMER

CLAY always asserted that he was a farmer; that the law and politics were with him mere side issues. There is no doubt that the happiest days of his life were spent at Ashland, and had he been let alone by friends and Legislatures, he would never have left it after his disastrous defeat in 1832. He bought Ashland about the time of his marriage. It was at first a small farm lying just outside the city limits of Lexington, but is now practically in the town, which has grown up to it. He added to the original farm until it reached over six hundred acres, a large estate for that section. Part of it was purchased with his wife's money. She was a Hart, and in that section a Hart had relatively much the position of the Vanderbilts in New York to-day. The Harts had immense estates in Kentucky and were great raisers of hemp. Lexington in those days was the most famous manufacturing city in the West. Its wares were notable, particularly those of iron and cordage. The first cut-nail machine in the world is said to have been set up in Lexington, which did a thriving trade with the whole of the West. This is surprising considering the early state of the highways. The cordage made by the Harts was largely sold in the East, and for a long time they supplied the entire navy. It is manifest that such an immense distance and such bad roads were great handicaps in competition with foreign cordage, and, according to the authority of one who

knew him intimately and is connected with the family by marriage, we here have the germ of two great ideas for which Clay fought for so many years,—protection and internal improvements. Kentucky cordage could compete in the Eastern markets only when there were easy transportation and a protective tariff. That Clay had a personal interest in these policies will seem to some self-sanctified political philosophers a terrible disgrace. It is not at all surprising nor regrettable that this was the case. Clay was too big a man to expect any legislation for his benefit alone or that of his family, but it brought home to him very practically a condition which existed and pointed out the remedy. He was shrewd enough to see that if Kentucky was benefited by a tax on cordage and iron, other communities could receive a like benefit, provided there was a way to get products distributed. This was a very practical philosophy, and it dominated Clay's political view for many years.

Clay experienced his greatest financial disaster over an attempt to cheapen hemp curing. One of the exasperations of hemp raising is that it takes so long for the crop to be cured for market. The green hemp is cut and allowed to lie out in the weather an entire winter, and is "rotted" by dew and rain under conditions not perfectly understood. Some ingenious person got up a scheme by which the stalk could artificially be rotted down to the fibre by the use of water. This was called the "water-rot" scheme, and immense sums were invested in developing it. Clay's son Thomas was one of the leaders in the enterprise, investing much of his own fortune and raising much more on the notes which his father signed. It is declared by his grandson that Henry Clay was interested as a partner in the affair, which turned out disastrously.

The hemp could be prepared by water, but it was found to be much more expensive than by the old method. It was after this failure that Clay came home and went to the Lexington bank to make arrangement for continuing his notes until he could pay them, when he was informed that the notes had been paid.

"By whom?" asked Clay.

"Not by your enemies," said the president, and that was all the satisfaction he ever got. At first it was very hard for the proud man to accept the anonymous gift, but he came to look at it philosophically and to appreciate the burden which his friends had lifted from his shoulders. Much of the money had been sent anonymously, its return was impossible, and it was impressed on Clay that he must not wound his friends by rejecting that which they were so anxious to give.

Otherwise Ashland was a success, though, as we have seen, most of the time it was under the administration of his wife, who was the best farmer in the neighborhood and he was second. Clay was very fond of the wine which he raised on his own estate, and offered it to all foreigners, some of whom are said not to have shared the enthusiasm of Mr. Clay for the vintage, which was crude compared with those of Europe. When abroad, Clay insisted that his wine was the best. He had no still of his own, as was common in that section; but some of his neighbors made the corn whiskey commonly called Bourbon, which was unknown in the East, though in the early days it was the staple currency of the West. Desiring to oblige a friend at Washington who wanted to taste the best Kentucky afforded, he secured a quart bottle of what was declared to be the finest quality.

There was no convenient express then to take

charge of and deliver packages; and indeed there was no way for himself to make the journey comfortably, save in his own carriage. But he set out for the capital hopefully, accompanied by Mrs. Clay and his son John, an adolescent youth, Uncle Aaron driving. At every steep hill, and there were many, in tenderness for the horses, Mr. Clay absolutely insisted that he and his son should get out and walk; invariably he carried the bottle of whiskey in his hand, and it were well had he invariably kept it under his eye. Safely arrived at the seat of government, the intimates were speedily got together, the bottle of so much cherishing produced, and, after a few felicitous remarks from Mr. Clay, opened. But at the pouring, outward and visible consternation sat on every countenance, seeing that not excellent whiskey but execrable water issued forth. Mr. Clay's own countenance was a mirror of troubled perplexity. Feeling that something must be said, he was beginning to say it, but not fluently,—the explanation was so obscure,—until a certain expression twisting the ingenuous features of his son caused a light to break.

"Ah, John, you young scamp!" he said, shaking a finger at the culprit, who had, with all pomp consistent with secrecy, regaled some chosen spirits of his own set with what had been intended for their betters.

On another occasion the conduct of this son towards his illustrious father left a good deal to be desired. With an antipathy to dogs, Mr. Clay never allowed one to follow him, but he tolerated Nep, his son John's hunting dog, solely on account of his valuable assistance in procuring the delicious birds so often on the table. John and Nep were inseparable; where one went the other also went, and neither was averse to the comforts of life. Therefore on one cold

morning Mr. Clay, coming into the family sitting-room, found this pair occupying most of the space before the open wood-fire. "Get away," said the master of the premises, pushing the dog with his foot. The indignant setter, with a growl, lost no time in fastening his teeth in Mr. Clay's clothing. "Call off your dog, John," said the alarmed statesman. "I believe he has bitten me." John was well acquainted with Nep, and, knowing that he was merely indulging in a little game of bluff, did not repress an undutiful smile as, after letting the old gentleman endure some excitement, he led his favorite from the room.

Clay was exceedingly fond of cranberries, which did not grow in the neighborhood. A friend named Simmons was going to a county where cranberries were plenty, and Clay wrote to a man of whom he had heard to send him "100 bushels per Simmons." The dealer was not an educated man, and managed only to make out that Clay wanted one hundred bushels of persimmons. These were plentiful in the neighborhood, and he had all hands available picking them. When Simmons was ready to return, he sent eighty bushels of the fruit along and said that the rest would soon follow. Clay was so tickled over the joke that he paid the bill without a murmur.

Clay was also fond of pigs. He imported the finest breeds, and was wont, when at Ashland, to go every morning to feed them with his own hand. Late in life, on a rainy morning, a visitor at Ashland was astonished to hear through the partition a warm discussion between Clay and Charles, his valet, the latter insisting that Clay stay in bed, and finally, as a last and successful inducement, offering to go and feed the pigs himself. Clay always kept a bowl of shelled corn in the dining-room to feed his

chickens, which would flock to him when he approached.

But the pride of Ashland in those days was the stud. Clay was fond of horses, and his thoroughbreds became famous the world over. In 1830 he began breeding thoroughbreds almost exclusively, whereas before this he had raised mules and horses of various kinds. He had a mile track built on his place for exercising his horses, and it is still in use by descendants of his original stud. He bought a number of broodmares, including Allegrante, for which he paid fifteen hundred dollars to Governor Barbour, of Virginia, and this was considered an enormous price in those days. He also purchased a half interest in Stamboul, the famous stallion, being one of four presented to our minister at the court of the Sultan. When they arrived in this country they were promptly seized by the government and sold, on the ground that it was unconstitutional for an officer of the government to receive a gift from a foreign potentate. Three thoroughbreds which afterwards became famous were presented to him by admiring friends,—Yorkshire, Magnolia, and Margaret Wood. These are not well known to the present generation, but sixty years ago they were household words among lovers of horseflesh. Yorkshire became a celebrated sire, and his get have won races on many tracks. Magnolia, known as "Empress of the Stud-Book," was only a broodmare, but her get became famous. Her first foal, named Magic, was entered for the celebrated Phœnix Hotel stakes at the Lexington races. One day, as Clay passed a jeweller's shop, he was invited in to see the pitcher that went with the race. He was surprised, it is said, to find it already inscribed with the name Magic as the winner.

"She has not won it yet," he observed.

"Oh, but she will," observed the jeweller.

To this Mr. Clay replied that he was not responsible, and if Magic lost, the jeweller must provide a new pitcher at his own expense, "for," said Clay, "hand, art, or part I hadn't in it."

Magic won.

It is of interest to know that Iroquois, the only American horse that ever won the English Derby, was a direct descendant of Magnolia, and that other records of the turf now standing were made by her descendants. Margaret Wood's descendants have had almost as illustrious a record. One of her sons was Wade Hampton, famous in his day for a villanous disposition. Sometimes he would win a race without the slightest trouble to any one, and at other times he would be utterly unmanageable and throw any jockey that ever lived. At New Orleans, where Clay was present at a celebrated race, Wade Hampton seemed to be in good form and fine disposition. He had many backers, and fortunes were staked on his success. He got off well, took the lead, and had the race won easily, when, not far from the finish, he suddenly became interested in something else, stopped short, walked to the rail, and began to nibble grass.

In 1842 Clay gave over the active management of the stud to his son John M., who lived for nearly fifty years afterwards and was one of the famous breeders of the turf. He never had a large stud, preferring quality to quantity. After he died his widow continued the business, and to-day manages the Ashland stock-farm, which is the only portion of the original estate which has never left the family since the death of the statesman. She has some magnificent horses, and is as active and intelligent a breeder as there is on the turf. In her home is much of the furniture that belonged at old Ashland,

THE PADDOCKS AT ASHLAND (1904), AND DESCENDANTS OF THE FAMOUS THOROUGHBREDS OWNED BY HENRY CLAY

(From a photograph taken for this volume.)

including the bed in which Henry Clay and his wife slept and in which the latter died. In a recent talk of the history of the stud, Mrs. Clay remarked, "Among the yearlings sold by me have been three Derby winners, one Realization winner, besides other good stake winners." All these are descendants of Henry Clay's original stud.

When Clay was released from political cares it was his delight to entertain at Ashland, and there is an amusing story told by one of his descendants concerning the experiences of a personal friend but bitter political opponent.

Judge P—— was himself a man of eloquence, and noted for his unfailing wit. In passing a night at Ashland, by some mischance he fell from an upstairs window, breaking his leg. His cries soon brought to his aid a relieving party with Mr. Clay at its head.

"My dear friend," he exclaimed, in accents of distress, "how did this happen?"

The suffering gentleman repressed his groans to promulgate the following:

"Mr. Clay, troubled in mind by thinking over some of your obnoxious measures, I was not sleeping well, and, experiencing much discomfort and desiring fresh air, I rose, going to a window; but being there confronted by your gigantic and visionary schemes of Internal Improvement, I fled to the door, meeting your Missouri Compromise. I rushed on for the stairs, and there, in a menacing attitude, stood your hateful opposition to the Sub-Treasury Bill. In despair, I jumped through the nearest window."

Kentucky, then as now, was celebrated for its mules, which Clay raised in great numbers. When his son was on a diplomatic mission to Lisbon, he had him select and ship two very fine Spanish jackasses, whose progeny brought high prices. He was es-

pecially fond of merino sheep, and secured one flock of fifty ewes which became notable. It was from the backs of these came the wool that made the homespun he was wont to wear so proudly and which, it is said, "he wore like a prince."

He was always interested in the farming of his sons. In the summer of 1832, when the campaign for the Presidency was at its height, he wrote a letter to his son Thomas, still preserved, in which he says, "How is your crop of corn, your ditching? Has it realized expectations? Our crops of corn and hemp are both unpromising, but better than was expected some weeks ago. The corn has been much thrown down by a recent storm," and so on in details, with an utter oblivion of politics and Presidencies.

Clay's personal activities as a farmer are a little difficult to understand, now that the entire system of slavery has been swept away. He was a practical farmer in that he studied the subject closely, but it is not possible to imagine him personally attending to the work in the fields, with his coat off, as did some of his contemporaries from New England. John Quincy Adams was not in the least hesitant about taking part in the haying or harvesting at Quincy. Even Webster loved to dig in the soil; but it is impossible to think of Clay or any other Southern gentleman in such a position. Every plantation was worked by slaves, under the care of an overseer, and to this man the owner gave instructions and looked for results. For some years Clay had a poor man as overseer, and greatly rejoiced when he found a better one. He spent much of his time, even when at Ashland, pacing up and down the walks and meditating on affairs. Unlike many Southerners, he had no library, but kept his books in the dining-room, and their number was

not very large. He found it better to originate than to copy.

There were about fifty slaves on the Ashland farm of four hundred and fifty acres, not counting that portion which his son John had charge of and inherited. Perhaps ten of these were house or personal servants. Of the rest, probably fifteen were either too young or too old to work. This would leave about twenty-five to work what was not a large farm. In these days a man would go into bankruptcy with so many to keep on such a small estate, and it can be seen how wasteful were the methods employed when such a large force was engaged. The negro did not work too hard, and in the winter there was still less for him to do. Yet they seem to have all been needed. In Clay's last days he was much distressed in Washington to learn that one of his best slaves was dead and that another was sick. This compelled getting two to replace them. He wrote frequently from Washington on the subject, urging his son to hire slaves rather than purchase, if he could; but to buy, if necessary.

His general view of farming may be learned from a letter written in 1833, in which he says,—

"Since my return from Washington I have been principally occupied with the operations of my farm, which have more and more interest for me. There is a great difference, I think, between a farm employed in raising dead produce for market and one which is applied, as mine is, to the rearing of all kinds of live stock. I have a Maltese ass, the Arabian horse, the merino and Saxe-merino sheep, the English Hereford and Durham cattle, the goat, the mule, and the hog. The progress of these animals from their infancy to maturity presents a constantly varying subject of interest, and I never go out of my house without meeting with some one of them to engage agreeably my attentions. Then our fine greensward, our natural parks, our beautiful undulating country, everywhere exhibiting combinations of grass and trees or luxuriant crops, all conspire to render home delightful."

Of course, to maintain all his cattle and horses he had to raise large crops of grain, little of which he marketed. The only produce commonly sold was milk, butter, and eggs, which were highly esteemed the whole region over.

About 1849, when he again re-entered public life, he seemed to feel that he was to die in harness, and was anxious to get Ashland off his hands, and urged his son James, who had removed to Missouri, to purchase it. James was esteemed a wealthy man at the time, but for some reason he declined. The aged Senator felt that the double responsibility was too much for him, even though his wife had charge of the estate in his absence. He apparently wanted her to be relieved of the responsibilities, but this was not to be.

After his death, Mrs. Clay made her home with her son John, to whom Clay had bequeathed the portion devoted to breeding thoroughbreds. That portion of the estate is still owned by the widow of John.

It became necessary to sell Ashland in order to distribute the estate, and it was sold to James, who removed from Missouri and was later elected to Congress. Greatly to the indignation of some members of the family, he tore down the mansion-house and rebuilt it on the same foundations, practically from the same plans, using the same material. While the excuse given was that the old house was not safe, there are those who knew James and think that he simply had a mania for building and wished to put a little more style into the house. Still, Henry Clay is reported to have said that the house would not much more than last his time. When the war came on James went South, and later died in Canada. Kentucky bought the estate, and it was used by the military college authorities for a time, but later it was bought by Colonel Henry Clay McDowell,

who had married a granddaughter of Henry Clay. Colonel McDowell is dead, but his widow now (1904) resides in the reconstructed mansion. The house is filled with relics of the great statesman, and the grounds have been restored as nearly as possible to the condition in which he left them. "Clay's Walk" is a semicircular path where he used to pace up and down when pondering on public affairs. A very few ash-trees which gave the name to the estate are left. It is not a long-lived species, though beautiful. The old ice-houses near the mansion are still as he left them, covered with curious conical roofs stretching from the ground to the height of a dozen feet. The mansion is covered with ivy, and has almost the same external appearance as when the Great Commoner left it.

Almost his last days there are still recollected by one of his descendants, Mr. Thomas H. Clay, of Lexington, who tells that when a boy he can just remember being at the house when the Legislature of Kentucky, headed by the venerable John J. Crittenden, came in a body to Ashland and informed the aged statesman that the State had asked him once more to assume the toga that he might heal the bleeding wounds of the republic. Mr. Clay came upon the porch and was visibly moved. In a voice broken with emotion he announced that he would accept the call of duty, though he had hoped to end his days in peace at Ashland. Soon afterwards he departed for Washington, where he died, having only been home twice in the mean time.

V

THE YOUNGEST SENATOR

At twenty-nine Clay had achieved a success far beyond his wildest hopes at the time he entered the State, nine years before. He was married into the richest family of the State, owned a comfortable estate, enjoyed about the best practice at the bar, had served a term in the Legislature, and was universally popular. Having achieved so much by an immense amount of energy that had called for less studious industry than one would naturally suppose, he felt it fitting that he should take a short vacation. The opportunity came when General Adair resigned from the United States Senate and the governor appointed Clay in his place for the short session of 1806–7.

At the time no comment seems to have been made upon the fact that he was not of constitutional age and did not become so until after his fractional term had expired. Afterwards a good deal was made of it and many explanations offered. It is asserted now by one of the family that Clay really was thirty years old, as shown by one of the family Bibles, which contradicts the currently accepted date of his birth. This may, however, be confused with the fact that there was an elder Henry who died when a baby, and for whom the statesman was named. It may be that Clay thought that a man almost thirty was eligible to all intents and purposes, or it may be that neither he nor any one else thought of it at all. The fact remains that he was the only man who has sat through his term in the Senate without being con-

stitutionally eligible. As nothing was said of the matter at that time, it need not concern us now, except as a curious event.

As Clay entered Washington from Alexandria, he had to take a ferry-boat, and here was his first practical introduction to the subject of internal improvements which was later to occupy so much of his attention. He was not aware that a bridge was contemplated, and when he expressed his conviction that one ought to be built, it was with joy he learned from a ferryman that the subject was coming up in the ensuing Congress, of which he was a member. Practically all he did at this brief session was to make an ardent speech for the bridge, in which he explained his whole position on internal improvements, showing a liberality of view that shocked some of the older men who were strict constructionists of the Jeffersonian sort. Now, Clay was at this time as ardent an admirer of Jefferson as walked the Capitol, but his worship of the Constitution was confined to the benefits derived or to be derived from that document, and not for its mere wording. It did not worry him a bit that there was in it no expressed power to build bridges or turnpikes. It seemed to him that if a good thing could be accomplished, and there was no actual prohibition, common sense dictated going ahead and doing it. He expressed his views freely and with the exuberant manner common to his address to a jury. The personal impression he made upon the Senators was that of a young and resourceful man with a tendency to harangue his hearers and a lack of appreciation of the Senatorial dignity. A more funereal legislative body never existed than the United States Senate in the early days. For years it had met behind closed doors, and now that its sessions were open, the proceedings were of the most formal and doleful character. There were no

efforts at oratory; few speeches of any sort were made, it being the custom for the Senators to briefly express their views and then vote. A Senator of the period complains that Clay was fond of flowery talk and much given to imagery, while his discourse lacked logical sequence. As his speeches on these occasions have not been preserved, the criticism may have been just; but probably the mannerisms of Clay affected the critic more than his lack of logic, for on matters connected with the tariff and improvements Clay spoke logically and forcibly.

We do know that Clay enjoyed himself hugely that winter in the Senate. He was to be found at all prominent social functions and seemed delighted with his "vacation," which also gave him a taste for further experiences of the sort. He wrote home that his reception had exceeded his expectations.

One thing he had got under way, but was not to see fulfilled. He helped secure the passage of a resolution asking the Secretary of the Treasury to report a plan for clearing out rivers, building roads, and making such other internal improvements as might seem necessary. He had no scruples about using public money for this purpose, and he was not one of those who, like Jefferson and Madison, insisted that an amendment must be made to the Federal Constitution before such things could properly be done. The country had just been electrified by the report of Lewis and Clark on their journey to Oregon. Expansion was the intoxicant of the hour. If Jefferson had been allowed to have his way, he would not have secured the annexation of Louisiana without an amendment; so it was not unnatural that Clay and others considered him an unnecessarily straight-laced administrator. It ought to be remembered always that Clay was one of the first to hold that this country had all the attributes of nationality,

and that it was not necessary to seek for them through the Constitution in the manner of conducting a patent-right suit. We shall see later, however, that this view was subject to limitations.

Clay went back to Kentucky pleased with his reception at Washington, but still believing Kentucky the fairest place on earth. On his return he was sent once more to the Legislature. This was more of an honor than at present. It was customary to choose the most eminent men as Representatives and Senators, and the honor was seldom refused, even when it involved great pecuniary sacrifice. It was a dignity offered him, even after he had been a candidate for the Presidency and had just left the office of Secretary of State.

The war-clouds were now hanging low and the country was in a state of ferment. Most of the people sided with Jefferson in his policy, which was far from successful, and which exhausted the country at the time war actually began. Clay was still ardent in his love of the first Republican President, and offered a resolution commending him and his policy, which was passed after Humphrey Marshall had opposed and alone voted against it. This was the time when he proposed that every member of the Legislature should wear clothes only of domestic manufacture, and once more Marshall attacked him as a demagogue, the result of which was the famous duel, as narrated elsewhere. The blood of martyrdom thus shed by Clay was destined to have wide-spread results in the formation of a party devoted to the cause of American industries.

Once more he retired to Ashland, and was planting and pleading at the bar when another summons came for him to go to the Senate, this time to serve two years. In reality this may be considered the beginning of his national career. For the rest

of his years he was in public life, except during brief intervals when he refused to leave home. This session was not to be a vacation for him. Foreign affairs had been going from bad to worse, and a conflict with either Great Britain or France, or both, was imminent. The young Senator from Kentucky now took his place as one of the forceful men of that body. He had no false sense of modesty about him. He bowed down to no one and admitted no superiority. Though he could be arrogant and offensive in the Senate when provoked, as a rule he was urbane and delighted his associates with his engaging manner. But he stood on his own feet and worked out his own conclusions without advice.

He opened the fight for protection by offering an amendment to one of the supply bills, requiring the Secretary of the Navy to purchase supplies of hemp, cordage, sail-cloth, etc., and to give preference to articles of domestic growth or manufacture. This was not done as a theoretical measure ; it was to help his own section and his own family. At this session he developed his views on protection, which were still moderate, and those of the Western farmer rather than of an actual manufacturer. Most things of normal every-day use were then supplied by the people of the vicinage. The neighboring farms produced homespun and leather and many of the things which have long passed into the hands of great single industries. Clay's ambition was not to make the country great as a manufacturing centre, but to see that domestic wants were well supplied. He had not, could not have had a conception of the tremendous development that was to come in the West, of the new sorts of transportation that were to revolutionize trade and make communication easy. He was thinking of the system by which every county is well-nigh an independent community from

an industrial point of view. He wanted to aid the farmer and planter and to encourage those trades which were then largely pursued in the homes, such as weaving, making hats, shoes, and even nails. He had no love for great centres where operatives huddled together, but was still inclined to the patriarchal system of government as it was in his own section.

His one sensational speech of the term was in reply to Horsey, of Delaware, at a time when Madison had become tired of delay in the West Florida question and had annexed it by proclamation, announcing that title had not before been actually exercised simply as a matter of conciliation. The dying Federalists were anxious for any chance to strike the administration. Horsey took it upon himself to assail Madison and deny that we had any claim to West Florida. This aroused the young eagle from Kentucky, and in his speech, declared to have been the most extraordinary in the memory of living members, he proceeded to rake the Federalist gray-haired men with his irony and to state his position with the utmost freedom. It was a common charge of the Republicans that the Federalists were really British at heart, and that they were willing to sacrifice true American interests for the sake of keeping on good terms with the court of St. James. Clay went further, and threw down the gauntlet to Horsey. Read to-day, this speech gives no evidence of that burning eloquence for which its speaker was noted. But we have contemporary evidence that, when he announced that the time had come when we should conduct our affairs without consulting Great Britain, his eyes gleamed with fire and his face glowed with indignation, so that the Senate was stirred for the first time with the eloquence which it was to know for the next

forty years. The speech was not all denunciation. It declared a desire for peace, an honorable peace, and a peace even with concessions; but Clay took his stand firmly that the time had come when we must assert our independence at every hazard and refuse to let our seamen be the lawful prey of British frigate captains. It was in denouncing impressment that the speaker reached his highest flights, in which he made his most profound impression upon the country, and which gave him that national fame at the very outset of a career which most men are glad to have achieved by a long term of service. Read to-day, many of Clay's speeches seem to have a good deal of spread-eagleism about them; to have in some respects the school-boy style. This is in part due to imperfect reporting and in part to the fact that Clay's speeches cannot be dissociated from his own personality. It is as unjust to him to read his speeches as it is to read the score of a Chopin sonata. Each requires an instrument for interpretation, and Clay's was one of the finest human instruments that a patriot ever played upon. In his forensic flights he struck the key-note of national devotion. It was his part to wake the fires of patriotism and to bind together the States as never before. It is true that he had none of the profundity of Webster, but in his day and generation he served the needed purpose. The bugle call he sounded drove England tacitly, if not openly, to revoke her right of search and to recognize the flag, as Clay demanded, as the credential of every American seaman.

It was at this session that Clay made the first great error of his career,—one from which he never fully recovered; one for which he spent the rest of his life apologizing. He fought the recharter of Hamilton's first Bank of the United States, and with such bitterness and success that his vote in the Senate

would have carried the measure, and certainly his influence in the House could have secured the one vote needed. A discussion of this will be found elsewhere; it must be noted here in chronological order.

At the end of his term Clay had made an impression on the Senate such as no young man has done before nor since, such as no man has ever done in an equal space of time. It was later, in the House, that Josiah Quincy called him "a statesman with pinfeathers not yet grown;" but this, if any, was his pinfeather stage, and he ill deserved the gibe from the stout old Federalist. Clay might have been elected to the regular term, but he declined. He found the atmosphere of the Senate too close for him. His speeches fell, for the most part, on deaf ears, and, having decided to continue in public life, he deliberately chose to enter the House, where his bold leadership was needed, and where in the rough and tumble of debate he would find a better field for his abilities. He was promptly chosen from his district, and was re-elected as often as he wished. There have been statesmen, like Benton and Adams, who, having failed of election to the Senate, have chosen the House in preference to oblivion, but Clay's action stands unique. He is one of the few statesmen who never was rejected by any constituency, whose service was not continuous simply because he would insist on declining, and who was ever begged to return to public life, and never was refused anything he asked of Kentucky, while he did refuse ambassadorships, judgeships, and cabinet places many times. When his ambition was aroused, it burned to white heat, and when he was defeated, either in measures or for the Presidential nomination or election, he recovered his equanimity sooner than any one else.

VI

WAR-HAWK

CLAY'S earliest recollection was of the day when his father was buried and the Tarleton troops raided his home, carrying off slaves, provisions, and even his mother's wardrobe, for which they could have had no possible use. But the deepest outrage was that a trooper thrust his sword into the newly made grave, which was in the yard near the home. That was an infamy Henry never forgot, and in a sense it was to him like the young Hannibal's oath never to cease war upon the Romans. Clay was not vindictive by nature, but that injury burned deep in his soul and he never forgot it, not even when he was an honored guest in Great Britain. It would be too much to say that this incident dominated or even greatly influenced him in his political career, especially in the part he took in bringing on the war of 1812; yet it cannot be eliminated, for he was so intensely human that he might well be moved by it unconsciously. His mother had told him the direful story many times, and the fact that practically all their fortune had been swept away, not in honorable warfare, but in brutal marauding, provoked a sense of injury that he could not forget, and which it was proper, within certain limits, he should always remember.

The New England recalcitrants were ever disposed to speak of our second quarrel with Great Britain as "Mr. Madison's War." In truth it was Henry Clay's. He forced the issue, and he signed, most unwillingly, the treaty of peace which, on its face, amounted only to a cessation of hostilities.

When Congress met in December, 1811, in defiance of all precedent, Clay was elected Speaker by a large majority. Many of the older members who had been so long in control either failed of re-election or were rudely shoved aside. The new members took control with the avowed purpose of declaring war on Great Britain. These youngsters, known as the War-Hawks, were recklessly defiant. They were sick of the devious paths of diplomacy which had brought the country into contempt, and considered war the only medium by which national honor could be restored. There was some ground for this position. Madison had made a mess of negotiations and had been cleverly caught in Napoleon's net.

There is no more distressing chapter in our diplomatic history than that stretching from 1806 to 1812. In the war between Napoleon and the various coalitions against him American commerce was ground between the upper and nether millstones. Great Britain declared a blockade of practically all the European coast along the Atlantic. Napoleon retorted with a blockade of Great Britain. As both of these were largely paper blockades, a series of reprisals was entered upon. As each nation wanted to starve the other out, it was impossible to permit unrestricted neutral commerce, even of articles not contraband. By Orders in Council, Great Britain forbade trade with the Continent unless the goods were landed in Great Britain and paid duty, on pain of forfeiture of vessel and goods. Napoleon retorted by the decrees of Milan, Berlin, and Rambouillet, which ordered any vessel complying with the British Orders to be sequestrated. As the Americans had most of the carrying trade, many foreign vessels assuming our flag, this was a case of being "damned if you do and damned if you don't." If the blockade had been effective, or

the navies of each large enough to carry out their decrees, there would soon have been no American ships. Many were seized, but the chance of profit was so large that many vessels took the risk until the Embargo was laid. This process of committing commercial suicide was worse than the seizure of the ships. It brought the country to the verge of ruin before it was repealed. It was followed by a Non-intercourse act forbidding trade with Great Britain or France, and this was little better than the Embargo, as all Europe was practically in one armed camp or the other. It did let loose some ships which engaged in a dangerous trade, but many of them were promptly seized and the situation in some respects was worse than ever. It was incumbent on the government to protect, though it was imprudent to support in an impulsive manner.

Then the arts of diplomacy came into play. Napoleon used lies and Great Britain a club. Erskine, the British minister, who had an American wife, made a nice mess of it. He came over to make a new treaty, and was so impressed with the American contention that, in violation of his instructions, he declared the Orders in Council revoked. Madison issued a proclamation reopening trade with Great Britain. Great was the joy in the land and intense was the indignation which followed when the British ministry promptly disavowed Erskine, called him home, and announced the Orders still in force. Then came Francis James Jackson, who had signalized himself in diplomacy by burning Copenhagen. In a few weeks he called Madison a liar and deceiver, and got his congé. Foster, who succeeded him, came prepared to atone for the "Chesapeake" outrage, but was adamant on the subject of the Orders in Council. Then the situation was made all the worse by the Indian uprising under Tecum-

seh in the West, which was largely at the instigation and by the aid of British officers in Canada. Harrison's victory at the Tippecanoe wiped out the Indian confederacy, but it fanned anew the flame of resentment against Great Britain.

The situation was now made more complicated by the affair of the "Little Belt." Captain Rodgers, of the United States frigate "President," started on a cruise from the Chesapeake, when she was overhauled by the "Little Belt," a British sloop-of-war, under the impression that the stranger was her consort, the "Guerrière." Her action in following him was so mysterious that Rodgers, smarting under recollection of the "Chesapeake" affair, made ready to fight, and when the sloop started to sail away, Rodgers followed and nearly blew her out of the water. This put the "Chesapeake" affair to sleep and made Foster's negotiations difficult, especially as he complained about our seizure of West Florida.

Napoleon's devious policy was to declare his decrees revoked and to continue their enforcement. Supposing them actually revoked, our vessels flocked to France and were promptly seized and sold for the benefit of the treasury, which needed funds for the approaching Russian campaign. Thus the country was once more between the devil and the deep sea, and Madison was in an agony of uncertainty, due to his own lack of discernment. Had Gallatin been Secretary of State, as Madison had originally wished, the situation would never have reached such desperate straits. But Sam Smith, of Baltimore, was so potent in the Senate that he actually forced Madison to appoint his brother Robert to the position,—a man not competent for a first-class clerkship in any of the departments. After Smith had nearly wrecked what little reputation the administration retained, Madison wrote all the papers for Smith to

sign, and forbade him to talk to any of the British ministers on any official matters whatever.

This was bad enough; but Madison was no man for the hour, even after his eight years' experience as Secretary of State under Jefferson. He constantly took counsel of his fears, vacillated, allowed himself to be duped by France and bullied by Great Britain, until it was no wonder that both nations held him and this government in contempt; and the Americans of all parties were much of the same opinion. Clay, while in the Senate, viewed the situation with increasing disgust, and his election to the House was for the express purpose of bringing about a change. This was the situation which the young War-Hawks faced, and they were ready for it. Their programme was war against Great Britain, though France was, perhaps, really the greater sinner. A nation more unprepared for war has seldom existed. The army was small and not efficient. There was not an officer of proved distinction in it. Some of the Revolutionary heroes held on, but none of them had ability, and all brought disasters. Harrison and Jackson, militia officers, had gained renown as Indian fighters, but this was to be no war with aborigines. The militia was ineffective. The navy was small, but efficient, thanks to the troubles in the Mediterranean. It would have been much more effective had not Jefferson squandered his appropriations on a lot of toy gunboats which, in his speculative philosophy, seemed monsters of destructiveness, but which were the laughing-stock of the military men of the whole world.

The War-Hawks, under Clay's lead, knew all this; they knew how the Embargo and Non-intercourse acts had not only impoverished the country, but had aroused political discussions which boded ill for the Union. To their credit be it said, they had the

THE PHŒNIX HOTEL, LEXINGTON

(This famous hostelry was for many years Whig political head-quarters in Kentucky. Here Clay dined frequently, and his farm supplied produce for its table. From a photograph taken about 1854.)

courage of their convictions. Owing in part to foreign ruthlessness and in part to American impatience, the time had come to decide whether the nation should disclaim and abandon its position as an independent nation or fight for its sovereignty. It ought not to have come to this, but it had, and the answer was war.

In this day the historian can read the accounts of that era and figure out exactly how enlarged statesmanship could have prevented war. True enough; but we had too little of that commodity. Also, one can see now very clearly how essential to the ultimate good of Europe and America was the war which Great Britain was waging against Napoleon. British statesmen pointed out that the affair was as much our concern as theirs; that if Napoleon could once establish absolutely his Continental system, and defeat Great Britain, he would go on to accomplish his dreams of universal empire, and America would soon pay the penalty for her refusal to enter the contest against him.

No doubt there was much truth in this position, but it was not equally true that this nation was to be used as a club without its own consent. British statesmen seemed to think that because of their leadership in the war against Napoleon they had permission to do as they pleased, irrespective of the rights of others. Had British diplomacy been generous, or even just, and had American statesmanship been above the ostrich type, no war would have taken place; but it had come to this extremity, that we must fight or acknowledge British suzerainty.

The people of the country were willing to fight, knowing little of the existing unpreparedness. Though, as a rule, Congress had followed the administration, a stinging rebuke was administered

in 1810, when nearly one-half the members were left at home. The voice of the people was for war, and Clay was the popular leader.

Clay's selection for Speaker was with the avowed purpose of bracing up the administration and forcing the issue. The new leaders of prominence were (besides Clay) John C. Calhoun, Felix Grundy, Langdon Cheves, and William Lowndes, men destined to many years of public service. The committees were so arranged as to carry out the war programme, and, in addition, Clay violated precedent by frequently leaving the chair and speaking on the floor. The debate soon opened on a question of increasing the regular army to a war footing. John Randolph of Roanoke, who had been relegated to the rear, was one of two who spoke against war, and only a miserable faction voted against the bill. Clay had made one of his famous speeches, in which he closed with a ringing demand for "free trade and sailors' rights." Contemporaries say (as usual) that it was one of his greatest efforts, stirring his auditors to unbounded enthusiasm. To-day it is barely readable, and one can imagine how remarkable must have been Clay's personal magnetism to have made such a seemingly feeble intellectual effort so effective.

The War-Hawks were now in fine feather, and laid down the law to Madison as to what he must do and must not do if he wanted a renomination. Candidates for the Presidency were then nominated by the party members of the two Houses of Congress, in caucus, and the War-Hawks had the whip-hand. There is some contemporary evidence to the effect that a written bargain pledging war was made with Madison, one member of Congress asserting that he had seen the document. This the War-Hawks denied, probably with truth. Madison was a timid man and only needed a master, and in Clay he

found him. No written bargain was necessary. From the vote on the army bill, in January, 1812, it was known that the administration was merely trying to get its house in order for the declaration of war.

And now the unexpected happened. The army bill exhausted the patriotism of a large number of members. When Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury, showed that there would be enormous deficits for three years, outside of any war expenses, and asked for heavy new taxes and large loans, many members took fright, to the indignation of Clay and the other leaders. The new taxes bore heavily on the already impoverished people, while new loans were not only objectionable, but there was small chance of getting them afloat. The National Bank was dissolved, specie was scarce, and trade at a low ebb. A bill to borrow ten million dollars at six per cent. passed easily, but the new taxes nearly ruined the war party, which increased duties one hundred per cent., imposed new internal taxes, and a direct tax of three million dollars. The new tax bill finally passed, but not until the House had absolutely refused to increase the navy in any way, against Clay's bitter opposition, had refused to insert in a bill a clause authorizing fifty thousand militia, with power to send them to Canada, and had refused even to raise a provisional army of twenty thousand men while the twenty-five thousand regulars authorized were being recruited, a task that all knew would take much time, if it was ever accomplished.

A brief embargo was laid to get our shipping under cover, and in June Clay closed his programme by securing the passage of a declaration of war. While many were apprehensive over the military situation, Clay, from first to last, was optimistic. His plan had been expounded in Congress over and

over again. It was to march on Canada and dictate peace at Quebec or Halifax, with the unmentioned understanding that Canada should be ours. In his strategy there was nothing small. In his mind's eye he had the lion cowering inside of a year. It is a curious fact that at one time Madison intended offering Clay the position of commander-in-chief, but was dissuaded by Gallatin. This would have been worthy of opera-bouffe. Clay had many merits, but military capacity was probably not one of these, and it was rash to make such an experiment during war time. Still, as it turned out, he could not have done worse than most of the American generals did in the first two years of the war; he might have done much better, owing to his personal magnetism. But an administration looking for a general-in-chief in a man who never owned a sword did not appear very formidable.

Clay had now declared war against the greatest naval power in the world and one of the strongest in the field. True, it was engaged in a war with Napoleon, but the star of that buccaneer was rapidly waning, and went out much sooner than was expected by Clay. To meet this foe, the War-Hawks gave the President a loan which he could not float, taxes that he could not collect, a regular army he could not raise, militia he could not use, and permitted him to retain the remnant of the navy founded by John Adams and everlastingly reprobated by every anti-Federalist. It was well that, in their excitement, the navy was not wiped out entirely. It got nearly all the honors of the war; its succession of victories made the nation respected, and more than any other element brought about an honorable peace. To Clay's credit be it said that he was the navy's most ardent champion. His eloquence could force a declaration of war, but it could not

wring money from the people's pockets nor incite them to energetic endeavor.

Congress adjourned to let Madison and his incompetent regular generals and militia colonels fight it out. Clay spent the summer going from one mustering camp to another, encouraging the young men to join the army, and succeeded admirably. Disasters followed one another on land in quick succession. Canada was twice invaded, only to end in retreat. Detroit was captured, to the disgrace of Hull; Harrison was checked in coming to his relief, and the Niagara campaign would have been humorous had it not been so tragic. Had this been the whole story when Congress met the following winter, there would have been gloom indeed. It was the despised navy, which Congress would not increase by so much as a cat-boat, that gained four spectacular victories, which for the first time showed that the British navy, ship for ship, was not invincible. In their dismay over the losses, Britons forgot the land campaign, and by the end of the year there was a chance for an accommodation. Indeed, before the British ministry heard of our declaration of war, the offensive Orders in Council were revoked, but no guarantees as to impressment were given. At that time press-gangs were infesting every harbor in Great Britain, and carrying off with force and arms any man who seemed to have the making of a sailor in him. Thousands of men were snatched from their families and forced into the service, and the English cries of rage against injustice that went up to the ministry were such as to make American complaints seem feeble by comparison. The truth was that Great Britain needed more sailors for her navy than could be induced to volunteer; hence she took them where she found them,—in the streets of her own cities or off the

decks of American vessels. Anything to beat Napoleon. All other considerations were ignored. This was brutal policy, though officially styled necessitous and heroic.

Considering that for six years Americans, in season and out of season, through diplomacy, the press, and every other channel, had not ceased to sound their grievances and demand redress, it is with astonishment we learn that the British ministry was amazed at the declaration of war, and actually considered the friendship of America as one of its chief assets. Such an attitude of mind may be an admirable asset in fighting a superior foe amid greatest discouragements and defeats, but it is a striking commentary on the way Britons handled their diplomacy.

When Congress reassembled the question arose whether an accommodation should be made or the war go on. There were many timid souls who were for peace, and among the bravest there were some who thought, considering that we had no army and no money, we had better get out of the situation as best we could. Clay never shone to better advantage than when he stood up for a vigorous prosecution of the war. Not only was this essential to his own salvation, but it was really the only possible course to pursue. To back down at this stage of hostilities would have made the situation worse than ever. Clay left the chair and in one of the score or so of speeches, each of which is called "the greatest effort of his life," he brought the House to terms. Members were carried into an ecstasy of feeling; some cried, others shouted, and others felt hope rising in their breasts where once had been despair. Clay suddenly discovered that impressment was, after all, the only real issue, and as on this Great Britain was adamant, the war must go on, and go on it did. Once

more it was Henry Clay's war, and its slogan, "These are our credentials," referring to the American colors at the mast-heads of our vessels, was Clay's.

If this war was to succeed, it would seem as if a magician's wand were needed to create everything necessary for the occasion. Clay was rash, but his cause was just. As it turned out, he was more nearly correct than those who figured out on paper that the war would be a failure. Clay ever believed in the plain, common people, and, except when a candidate for the Presidency, this opinion was usually justified, —if not immediately, at least in the long run.

David's chances against Goliath seemed, even at the start, much better than ours against Great Britain. We had a sling, but no stones in it except a few ships from which nothing was expected and apparently nothing demanded.

VII

PEACE-MAKER

THE first two years of the war discouraged nearly every man in the country except Henry Clay. His optimism never wavered.

The year 1813 was little more advantageous to the American cause on land than the preceding one. One fiasco followed another. Once more the navy covered itself with glory, but its fighting days were nearly over, as most of the vessels were blockaded. Privateers scoured the ocean and did enormous damage to British commerce, and marine insurance rates rose to a very high figure. The British prepared for campaigns from Canada, and apparently were going to sweep the country.

At this juncture the Czar of Russia was determined to destroy his former ally, Napoleon, whose disastrous Moscow campaign was just ended. Everything must tend in that direction, and, as Great Britain must do much of the work, he was annoyed over the war with America. He had in fact broken with Napoleon on the matter of American commerce, which he freely admitted to his Baltic ports. John Quincy Adams, our minister at St. Petersburg, could scarce believe his ears when he heard that the Czar had, at his suggestion, offered to mediate in the matter. Great was the joy in America, and a commission was sent to join Adams in making peace. Unfortunately, the British ministry took another view of the subject, and the Czar was told, rather cavalierly, to keep his hands off. Adams, whose spirits had been

rising, was now plunged in despair. He resolved to approach the Czar once more through Roumanzoff, the Secretary of State. The latter, for reasons of his own, was friendly enough to the Americans, but feared the Czar would take the suggestion ill after his first repulse. To Adams's astonishment, the Czar, who was in the field in that campaign which ended in Elba, eagerly adopted the suggestion, and once more approached Great Britain in terms that amazed and distressed the ministry in London. It was impossible to categorically refuse this second request from an ally and as impossible to accede. A middle course was decided on. Great Britain would negotiate for peace direct, the idea being to nurse the conference until the end of three great campaigns in America. Prevost was to invade New York from Canada with an overwhelming force ; Brock was to take Baltimore and Washington ; and, after Napoleon was out of the way, Packenham, brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington, was to capture New Orleans with the flower of the British army. After these had been accomplished, peace could be made on British terms. This was plainly stated to be the policy, and nothing in history seemed more likely in the spring of 1814 than that it would be accomplished.

If our army had accomplished little, if the navy was cooped up, there was at least some intellectual talent left, and of all the victories in this or any other war we have waged, the bloodless conquest at Ghent is the greatest. The American commission, as finally arranged after bickering and heart-burnings, consisted of John Quincy Adams, Albert Gallatin, James A. Bayard, Henry Clay, and Jonathan Russell. Aside from the last named, these were all men of first-class abilities, and Russell was by no means without merit. America could not have produced a stronger delegation, and it is doubtful if Europe

could have even matched it. To meet these Great Britain finally sent three men of second-rate abilities, Lord Gambier, Henry Goulburn, and Dr. William Adams, all creatures of Lord Castlereagh. These men understood that they were sent specifically to prevent a peace, except on their own terms, and to bring about a rupture, without having the acumen to understand that in the game of diplomacy one must play according to the rules, and must manœuvre an opponent out of position. Castlereagh did not expect these men to make peace, but he had no expectation that they would make idiots of themselves and a laughing-stock of Great Britain.

The first meeting of the commissioners took place August 8, and when, after preliminaries, they got down to business, the proposals of the Britons nearly closed the whole incident. Americans had come to negotiate for peace ; the Britons were prepared only to reduce the United States to a satrapy of Great Britain. The British proposals were, in brief, that all of what now comprises Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, most of Indiana, and a third of Ohio should be set apart as a neutral Indian country ; Great Britain to take most of Northern New York and New England, all of the south bank of the St. Lawrence and the Niagara, the Americans to build no forts on the lakes and keep no navy there. The Americans were to give up their rights to the inshore fisheries. The Britons would then be willing to discuss other matters.

When these proposals were received by the Americans, the hearts of four of them sank. Believing that the British commissioners had definite and probably unchangeable instructions, they looked on the demands as simply an easy way of breaking off negotiations. Here Clay's keen perceptions stood him in good stead. He alone maintained

that the demands were bluster, that Great Britain would not adhere to them, and that the policy to pursue was to outbrag them, or, as we should say in these days, outbluff them. As a fact, Clay correctly divined the situation. It was not a promising outlook, but Clay's programme or something akin to it was the only one possible. Adams was willing to break off the whole negotiation on the Indian boundary, but no one supported him. Adams had neither a sense of humor nor a wide knowledge of human nature. He took everything seriously, and believed that too often men were as immovable in purpose as he.

The American commissioners informed their opponents that they had no instructions about the Indians, but had sent for them, and in the mean time were ready to discuss other points. The Americans had been ordered to make no treaty which did not include distinct disavowal by Great Britain of the right of impressment of American seamen. To Clay such instructions were not necessary. He had twice brought on the war by his lurid speeches concerning the woes of the American sailor, forced to fight in British ships against enemies who did not concern him. Clay announced over and over that giving up impressment was the *sine qua non* of a treaty.

Pending the arrival of fresh instructions, the American commissioners, little expecting an accommodation, enjoyed themselves as best they could. There were many private dinners, and a few public ones were tendered them. These Clay enjoyed hugely, as he was fond of good living, and made many friends. Later he had a quarrel with Gallatin, who had neglected to inform Clay of an invitation tendered the commission, and he alone was absent. Gallatin apologized, but it did not entirely

soothe Clay's ruffled temper, who was not yet certain that the slight was not intended. He considered himself, by his position and experience, the real representative of the American people. Adams was nominally at the head of the commission, and felt his immense superiority over the others, both because of his larger experience in diplomacy and his efforts in bringing about the meeting. At the start he attempted to take matters into his own hands, and was grieved to find that the despatches which he prepared with great pains were riddled and mutilated by his associates, and especially by Clay. Adams had no love for Clay, underestimated him, and was temperamentally so constituted that he could not get along with him at all. He took all of Clay's criticisms as personal, and poured out his wrath in his journal. Clay, as the real author of the war, and as the popular head of the republic by reason of his position as Speaker, did not propose to be pushed aside by Adams or any other man living. Clay never played second fiddle in his life, and if diplomacy was new to him, he had no lack of appreciation of his ability, and as it turned out his estimate was just.

Thus we find him at the start objecting to long despatches, figurative language, and ambiguous phrases. Clay thought, in most instances, a page or even half a page of writing-paper sufficient for any communication to the British commissioners. Adams liked to refer to God and call heaven to witness, in his despatches, how honest and upright were American demands. Clay insisted on cutting these out, as he said they were mere cant.

The negotiations lasted nearly five months, and had there been a trans-Atlantic cable in those days, peace would hardly have been accomplished. Delays in communication between Ghent and Wash-

ington or London inured to America's benefit. The stupidity of the British commissioners, in the brutal manner of making their demands for a "rectification of the Canadian frontier" and the neutral Indian territory a pretext for breaking off negotiations, created consternation in the ministry, who saw too late that they had chosen the wrong instruments. The Indian question soon went to sleep, after Harrison's defeat of Tecumseh at the Thames, and the basis was shifted to regular diplomatic usages. As to territory, should the *status quo ante* or *uti possidetis* prevail? In other words, should each nation return to its original boundaries, or should each keep what territory it had gained. The British commissioners naturally chose the latter. Ross had taken Washington, though losing his life before Baltimore; Prevost was supposedly about to capture New York, and Packenham would surely have New Orleans before the negotiations concluded. *Uti possidetis* was, therefore, the British demand, including a large portion of Maine, which was claimed not only by conquest, but on the ground that former boundaries had not been properly construed.

All these pourparlers consumed time, and meanwhile mighty events were taking place in America. The first the Americans knew of the disasters at Washington was through a bunch of newspapers sent to Clay by Goulburn, accompanied by a polite note. Clay later returned the compliment, with equally courteous language, by sending Goulburn American papers detailing Macdonough's victory on Lake Champlain and Prevost's disastrous retreat into Canada.

The news of Ross's destruction of the Capitol greatly depressed all the American commissioners except Clay. He still maintained that the conquest of America was impossible, abused the Massachusetts

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farmers to Adams's face, and spoke very boastfully of what Kentuckians would do if they ever got a chance at the British. This disgusted Adams, who thought Clay a mere braggart. What he thought when he heard what Kentucky and Tennessee troops did at New Orleans he did not record, but their conduct was a justification of Clay, even if his remarks savored of braggadocio.

The commissioners went to the theatre, which Clay enjoyed, though it usually bored Adams. The Puritan made strong efforts to be sociable. At a ball one night the party sat down to cards,—at the then popular game of "all-fours." Clay won from Adams a picture of an old woman he had drawn in a lottery and a bouquet from another member. This wild dissipation appears to have been too much for Adams, who does not seem to have repeated it, nor to have had any higher estimate of Clay. Soon afterwards he notes in his journal, "Mr. Clay is losing his temper and growing peevish and fractious. I, too, must not forget to keep a constant guard upon my temper, for the time is evidently approaching when it will be wanted."

It certainly was. Clay was neither peevish nor fractious. He wanted peace only with honor. He knew the rising American spirit as did no other of the commission. He divined the future of America better than any of them. He may have been overconfident,—overbearing, perhaps; but Clay, though a thorn in the flesh of all but Russell, had, if not precisely the right ideas, those without which the peace would have been a farce and would have blighted the American spirit.

Once more the American commissioners manœuvred the British out of position, and the latter asked London for instructions. Castlereagh and Liverpool were now beside themselves with chagrin.

Hanover Sheet Square London 24th May 1815

My Lord

We have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your lordships' official note of the 22d inst.

Having, as we have already informed your Lordship, no powers on the subject to which your note refers, we will lose no time in transmitting it to our Government. We will also place in the possession of the American Minister near his Britannic Majesty's Government, whose arrival here we daily expect, a copy of your Lordship's note, together with a statement of what had previously passed respecting the unfortunate event at Dartmoor.

We embrace the opportunity of tendering to your lordships assurances of the high consideration with which we have the honor to be

The Right Honble
Viscount Castlereagh
Secty of State
for the Foreign Dept
&c &c &c.

Your Lordships
most obt
Hble Servts
H. Clay
Albert Gallatin

JOINT NOTE OF COMMISSIONERS CLAY AND GALLATIN TO LORD CASTLEREAGH DURING TREATY NEGOTIATIONS IN LONDON, IN CLAY'S HANDWRITING. PROBABLY NEVER DELIVERED

(Original in possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky. Photographed especially for this volume.)

The British ministry was put in the position of desiring to continue the war for conquest only. There were two very serious reasons against this policy. One was that it would make the war popular in America, especially in New England, where there had been hitherto so much defection. That section, however, could not be expected to stand mute and see its territory dismembered and its fisheries taken away. A hint to this effect was conveyed to the ministry, which was shrewd enough to see the point, even though it was aware, through the Henry letters, the speeches in Congress, the disputes of governors with Madison, and the call for the Hartford Convention, of the fact that dissension existed. What impressed them more was the growing unpopularity of the war in Great Britain. Napoleon was now in Elba and the twenty years' war was at an end, save for the coming and unexpected Waterloo campaign. Great Britain had made tremendous sacrifices to get rid of the Corsican, and the cry of the nation, burdened with debt, was now for peace. The American war was known to be but an incident of the European campaign, and the people longed for a chance to recuperate. The waspish Yankee privateers were infesting the Irish and English Channels, and, in the end, destroyed or captured nearly two thousand British merchant vessels. The average Briton did not care a rap about the Maine boundary or the Niagara frontier.

For the ministry to back down incontinently was impossible, so the advice of the Duke of Wellington was asked, with the suggestion that he go to America as viceroy, to make war or peace as he saw fit. The Iron Duke was not a man of ideals or imagination. He replied that he would go if ordered, but he could not see that British successes had been such as to make any claim to American territory tenable.

The fact is, he had heard of the astonishing Niagara campaign of Jacob Brown, where, in two pitched battles and an assault, the British were either fought to a stand-still or defeated. Moreover, Brock's campaign had been a practical failure. He had burned the Capitol with a ruthlessness which laid him open to execration, even in London, but had failed to capture Baltimore, and had lost his life. That ended the affair. Moreover, about this time came the news of Macdonough's surprising victory on Lake Champlain and the sudden retreat of Prevost into Canada. On the whole, it seemed likely that if the *uti possidetis* were set up, the Americans would be the gainers. Accordingly, the *status quo ante* was accepted, and now for the first time it seemed to the Americans that an honorable peace was in sight.

The insolence of British demands, which had so long kept the American commissioners pretty well together, now disappeared, and, on coming to the constructive features of the treaty, they split up into angry factions. Clay would have hung out to the end for an express renunciation of the right of impressment, but the ground was swept from under his feet by the arrival of fresh instructions from Madison to be silent on the subject if the peace could only thus be procured. This was a sensible conclusion. The end of the Napoleonic wars had ended impressment itself, and it has never since been revived. This was a sore disappointment to Clay when he thought of his burning speeches in favor of sailors' rights, and he gave in with bad grace, for he feared the peace would be unpopular.

During all the discussions over territory Clay was agitated lest the Britons should learn of his speeches in favor of conquering Canada. Fortunately, he escaped this humiliation, and was obliged to give up impressment; but on one point he made his stand.

Under the treaty of 1783, Great Britain had the right to navigate the Mississippi, to which there could be little objection so long as the west bank was foreign soil. Now the case was altered, as we owned both banks and the mouth, and Clay resolved to risk the peace rather than renew this right. Singly, this proposition would have caused little trouble, as the right was of small value to Great Britain, though its possible exercise would be harassing to the people along the river, whose interests Clay had so closely at heart. It was, however, coupled with another which was of vast importance to both countries,—the fisheries off Newfoundland and the Grand Banks. Old John Adams had almost risked the peace in 1783 to gain the concession to the inshore fishing, landing, and curing privileges, and had won. His son, John Quincy, was willing to see a British flotilla go up the Mississippi every day, but to have given up the fishing privileges would not only have angered New England, but would have broken his father's heart.

From this time on there was a duel between Adams and Clay that brought out the best and worst points of both. Could the British commissioners have known of the angry American quarrels going on in camera, they would have been edified and strengthened in their purpose. Adams was the nominal head of the American commission, but his temperamental frailties were such that Gallatin actually took the lead, and by his tact and statesmanship finally brought a composition. The British, after claiming both rights, were willing to set off one against the other. Clay was willing if the fisheries were given up ; Adams, if the Mississippi was sacrificed. They went at it tooth and nail, called each other hard names, until finally Adams learned to curb his tongue. There are few human documents

so interesting to Americans as the diary of John Quincy Adams, which he kept his whole life long with religious fidelity. Most of our information as to the inside workings of the commission comes from this source.

Clay was ready to break off negotiations at this point, but Adams, who had offered to do so on the Indian question and was overruled, was now for an accommodation, if possible. Clay was for war. In his diary, Adams writes that Clay announced boldly that "he had no doubt but three years more of war would make us a warlike people, and that then we should come out of the war with honor. Whereas, at present, even upon the best terms we could possibly obtain, we shall have only a half-formed army, and half retrieve our military reputation. He was for playing *brag* with the British plenipotentiaries; they had been playing *brag* with us throughout the whole negotiation; he thought it was time for us to begin to play *brag* with them. He asked me if I knew how to play *brag*. I had forgotten how. He said the art of it was to beat your adversary by holding your hand, with a solemn and confident phiz, and outbragging him. He appealed to Mr. Bayard if it was not.

"'Ay,' said Mr. Bayard, 'but you may lose the game by bragging until the adversary sees the weakness of your hand.' And Mr. Bayard added to me, —'Mr. Clay is for bragging a million against a cent.'"

This is an interesting dissertation not only on the situation then in hand, but upon the early form of poker (then called brag), played with but three cards in the hand and one face up on the table. It was this game which cost Clay fortunes,—as much, it is said, as eight thousand dollars in a single night. Twice in his diary, at Ghent, does Adams complain

that Clay was still playing cards in the early morning when the diarist arose to perform his daily round of appointed tasks, according to the Puritan schedule he had established for himself in youth.

Clay was wrong in thinking that brag alone would suit the present case. Russell was with him, but at first the three others were against them. Fortunately, the British commissioners did not accept the offer, and the suggestion was made to be silent on both topics; then Clay announced that he would not sign the treaty if the Mississippi were left open to Great Britain. This brought Bayard to his side, who wanted to avoid a rupture. Finally, the patience of all, even including the agreeable Gallatin, became exhausted because Clay seemed to be backing and filling to care more for his reputation in Kentucky than for peace. Gallatin was at last obliged to rebuke Clay for trifling with serious matters.

In the end peace was brought about by omitting both the fisheries and the Mississippi, leaving them to future negotiations. Even this did not please Clay, whom Adams reports as saying that they "had made a damned bad treaty, and he did not know whether he would sign or not." If he could have known the state of feeling at home, he would not for a moment have hesitated to sign. The administration was in dire straits, and the peace treaty came to it in the nature of a reprieve.

As signed, the treaty was little more than a cessation of hostilities. Some of the issues were already dead and the rest were left to time to settle, and, fortunately, all were eventually decided in our favor. Clay's part in making the treaty was important. He was bold when others were fearful, and his contumaciousness over the Mississippi was in the end a great gain.

After the signing, an angry and undignified quarrel

took place between Clay and Adams as to the custodianship of the papers. Adams, as head of the commission, claimed the right; but Clay got an order from a majority of the commission to turn them over to him, which Adams refused. In a wordy duel, Clay gave Adams a piece of his mind which long rankled in the latter's breast. Each seemed anxious to get credit out of the matter, but in the end it amounted to nothing, as both stayed in Europe for some time. Clay remained to help negotiate a commercial treaty with Great Britain. While there he refused to meet the Prince Regent unless officially called upon to do so,—an exhibition of democracy and boorishness more in vogue then than now.

While on a visit to Paris he met Madame de Staël, who charmed him with her wit and her assurances that she had worked in London for the American cause. The matter of the suggested appointment of the Duke of Wellington to command came up, and Clay replied that he was sorry it had not been gazetted, on the ground that if the Duke had won in the field, there could have been no shame in succumbing to such an adversary; while, if the Americans had won, the glory would have been so much the greater. Madame de Staël is said to have been greatly pleased over this incident, which she later related to the Duke.

When Clay got home and found how popular the peace was, he was quite willing to share in the glory, though maintaining, over modestly, that it was a very simple affair after all,—which it wasn't.

A laughable incident illumines the Kentucky view of the peace proceedings. From time to time the government published despatches in which Clay's demands on certain positions as a *sine qua non* were frequent. This mystified the unlettered Kentuck-

ians, until one of them suddenly discovered that *sine*, *qua*, and *non* were three islands in the Passamaquoddy Bay. "And Hennery Clay will never give 'em up, if we fight forever." This popular notion saved much of that reputation which Clay feared would be destroyed by the peace.

Clay was a good man of business in this matter. He kept a close account of expenses outside those paid by the commission, and among the bills audited is one for twenty-five dollars, paid for newspapers while abroad. He also put in a claim for half an outfit while in London, of which we shall hear later.

VIII

THE SPEAKER

In the winter of 1847–8 Clay was in Washington attending to some Supreme Court business, and went into the House chamber one day to listen to the proceedings, very shortly after Winthrop had been chosen Speaker. He looked on attentively for some time, and later met Winthrop in the corridor and said, in a very kindly way, "I have just one remark to make: when you have a case to decide, do it quickly and stop there." The young Speaker appreciated the advice all the more because he saw that Clay felt that he needed it.

This was the principle on which Clay acted throughout his occupancy of the chair. He never hesitated a moment, and it has not been found that a single one of his decisions was overruled. To-day the decisions he made are accepted as authority. He was always courteous even to his bitterest opponents, and his non-partisanship as presiding officer was as great as that of the Speaker of the British House of Commons. Even in making up committees he was felt to be too liberal to the opposition, but Clay was firm in his contention that the best way to accomplish anything was to give the opposition the best showing possible.

Not only was Clay elected Speaker on the day he first took his seat in the House of Representatives, but he was elected Speaker at every Congress wherein he sat, though twice he resigned the office: once when he went to Ghent and once when he found it

impossible to attend a short session. He was absent during the session of 1821–3, but no sooner did he return than the Speakership was his.

Up to his time the Speaker had seldom engaged in debate upon the floor. There was no law against it, but it had seldom been done. Clay, however, indulged freely in debate, and actually led the House in important legislation. Most of this was when the House was in Committee of the Whole and he was not occupying the chair. The House sat much more in this manner then than now, when there are so many standing committees which have charge of formulating legislation. We have seen how he led the debate in the matter of war and war preparations. His leadership was needed, and without it the House would have floundered badly. As it was, he could not get the men, the money, or the ships he wanted; but he kept a pretty tight rein, and as his mastery grew he became imperious. It was hard for him to brook opposition, and he never forgave Josiah Quincy for calling him, during the debates on the war, "a statesman with pin-feathers not yet grown." This was an unjust thrust, for if there was any full-fledged statesman abroad at that time, it was Clay. It is true that his policy may be open to criticism, but not his method. He was the one man who could silence John Randolph of Roanoke, and the old man never forgot nor forgave it, and the end of their contention was the duel elsewhere narrated.

At this time the House was a changing and changeable body. Most of the older members who had sat almost from the beginning had departed and the newer element was in control and needed Clay's masterful hand. It was a peculiarity of Clay that he could always manage affairs for any one else successfully, while he embarrassed his own. He not only dominated the House, but he practically domi-

nated the administration for years; and it was this sense of power, derived from unfailing success, that led him very properly to aspire to the Presidency.

We have seen how his first appearance in Congress was as a fledgling Senator when he worked for the Alexandria bridge. In his other brief term he further expanded his views only to meet with opposition. The Cumberland Road, or National Turnpike, as it was more commonly called, was the first step in this direction. It was a stone road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, (West) Virginia, and was projected and partially constructed through Ohio and Indiana, but at last was nipped by vetoes from the Virginia Presidents who made a fetich of the Constitution. This road had been exceedingly serviceable in connecting the East with the West at a time when private enterprise could not afford such an outlay. Jefferson at first favored it on the ground that it was a military road, and then had his doubts. Madison disapproved of it, and Monroe abandoned it, so that finally it was turned over to the States through which it ran. Clay was its ardent champion. He took a prophetic view of the country, and in one of his speeches called attention to fact that at some future day the country would have a hundred million inhabitants, and internal improvements of the sort, by national aid, would be absolutely necessary and that the people would find them constitutional. He made the vital point that if such expenditures would be proper a century hence they were proper now. The plan of a constitutional amendment to provide for them did not commend itself to him, because he knew the jealousies were such that they would make its adoption impossible: He was for doing a right and proper thing at once. His notion of a chain of turnpikes from the Passamaquoddy to

the Mississippi, with others North and South, was in his day a very liberal one, seeing that this was before the era of railways.

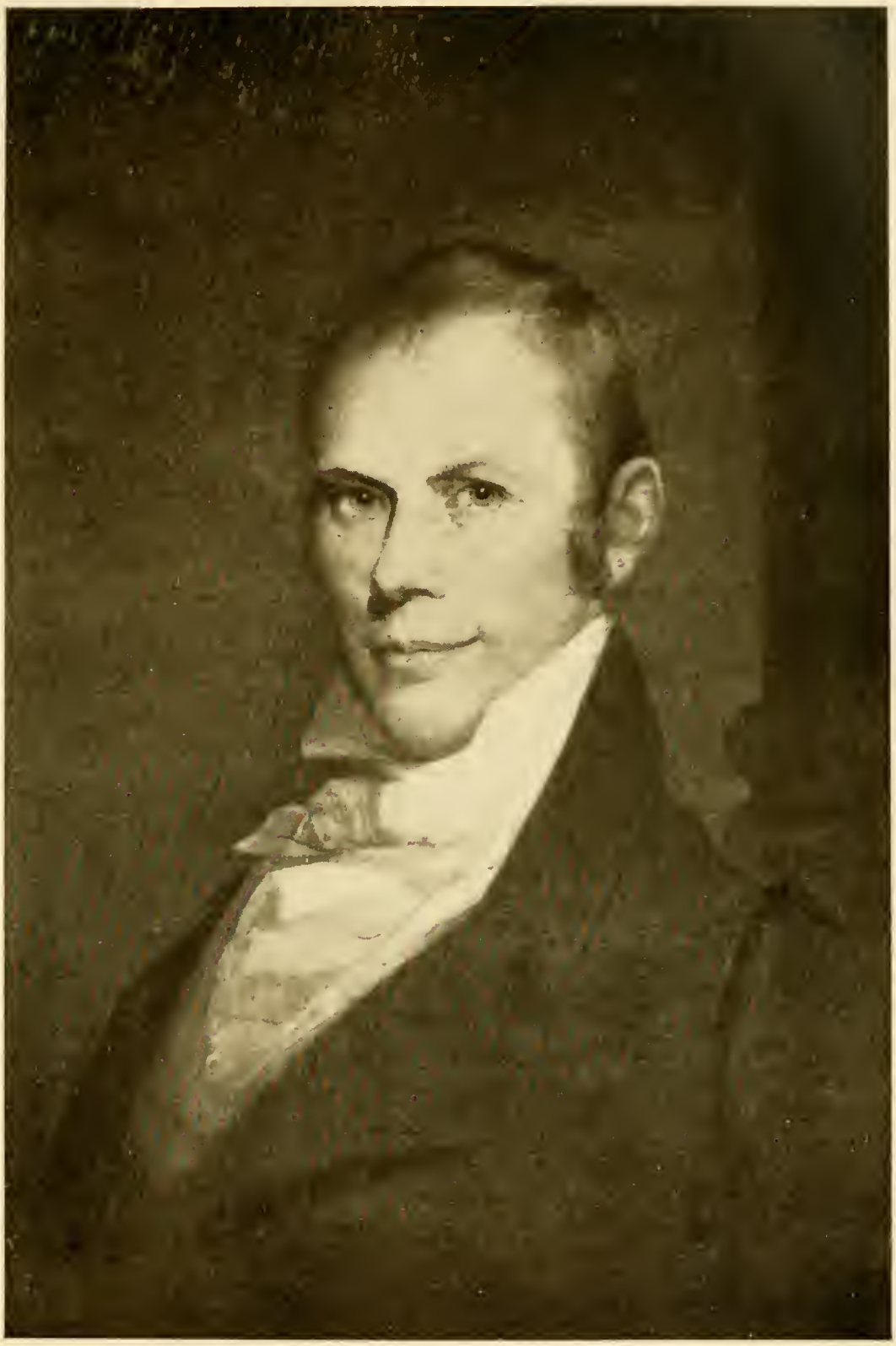
Clay could usually convince the House or the Senate when he sat in either body, but not always the house in which he did not sit. Most unfortunately, some of his best plans went astray by reason of Presidential vetoes.

In 1817 Clay, with the assistance of Calhoun and others, secured the passage of a bill which erected a fund out of the bank bonus and dividends and from other sources, to be permanently for the extension of internal improvements, and it was hailed as a great measure. Unfortunately, Madison vetoed it on the day before he went out of office, and Monroe proved no more pliant, as he announced in his first message that he did not believe in the constitutionality of such measures. This prevented the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal for many years, and when it was finally dug, it had a formidable rival in the railway. Indeed, the railway put an end to the propaganda, as such, and in later years Clay abandoned it, though it was resurrected on a larger scale by a later generation.

There are few of Clay's speeches which read better in these days than those he made on this topic. Here he was on firm ground, and history has sustained his view in every particular. When in the Senate he had heard Bayard earnestly recommend that Congress subscribe to the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal, then one of the largest enterprises of the sort in the country. At this time Clay thought Bayard was going too far, but soon afterwards he made a visit to Philadelphia and saw the massive timbers which were being hauled overland to build the new frigates which afterwards did such famous service. With his practical cast of mind, he sat down and figured out

that the cost to the government of transporting these timbers overland, was equal to the whole sum which it had been asked to subscribe to the canal. Now, then, asked Clay, does the Constitution fetter us so that we must actually spend on a single operation enough to build a canal that would save money for all time? He was disgusted with the three Republican Presidents for their narrow views, and, though preserving cordial relations with them most of the time, did not hesitate to speak his mind. In fact, he never did hesitate to speak or write his mind, and it cost him the prize he wanted. If, like the scheming Van Buren or the sleek Buchanan, he had learned to keep his ideas to himself he might have been President and have left no greater name than either of them.

He plainly said that the sophistry of Jefferson, by which he managed to work out a right to build the Cumberland Road according to his own views of constitutionality, was to him inexplicable. The remedy was worse than the disease, he asserted. As to Madison, he simply said that that gentleman had flatly contradicted himself by his veto, and quoted him in one of his official recommendations to Congress to exercise "their existing powers" to erect "a comprehensive system of roads and canals." As to Monroe, then President, who had vexed them with one of his vetoes, he declared that his veto message had no logic nor argument,—"nothing addressed to the understanding." This was plain talk; the sort of language no other member of the party would have used concerning the President or his predecessors. It shows how terribly in earnest Clay was. In his argument for the constitutionality of the improvements he laid down the principles which were later followed and obtain to the present day. Unfortunately, it availed nothing for the time being, and it



HENRY CLAY, SPEAKER

(This portrait was painted in 1814 by J. W. Jarvis for Mrs. Clay before her husband sailed for Europe. Original hanging at Ashland. Photographed especially for this volume.)

was not until the younger Adams came to the Presidency that anything was accomplished, and then the time was too short to do much before the Jacksonian frost killed the buds that had started. Tyler did the rest.

This was soon after the war, when the country was enjoying a fictitious prosperity, and it was followed by a period of depression that would have made government aid impossible, even if there had been no vetoes in the way. Immediately after the war there had sprung up an immense activity in all lines of business. Every one rushed into debt and all were soon to be rich. State bank currency was inflated and imports were extraordinarily heavy. When the crash came there was an immense amount of imported goods on hand that no one could buy and a lot of grain that could not be sold. About this time there occurred one of those curious popular outbursts of resentment that seem laughable now, but were certainly serious enough at the time.

Since the beginning members of Congress had received six dollars a day for services and mileage. Now, large as that sum seemed to the ordinary farmer or mechanic, it was not enough to pay the expenses of a man in Congress who "lived like a gentleman,"—a situation which exists at the very present. Clay complained that he was obliged to draw constantly upon his own resources, though perhaps his debts at cards were greater than his normal expenses. In 1816 the members of Congress concluded to increase their emoluments by making the compensation fifteen hundred dollars a year, regardless of the number of days in a session. The average sum drawn before this was about nine hundred dollars a year. Even then there was some doubt as to whether it would be well received ; so Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, the reputed slayer of

Tecumseh, was selected to present the measure, which was adopted, though not until another Kentuckian, Desha, had insisted that the six-dollars-a-day plan was enough. The bill finally passed by fourteen majority, the Senate concurred, and it became a law.

Some members may have expected dissatisfaction over the Compensation law, but surely no one imagined the storm of indignation that immediately arose. No act of Congress from the beginning, not even the Alien and Sedition laws, so aroused the people to fury. Without regard to party, they fell upon the members as they came home and stabbed them full of wounds. At the elections which followed, a number of the ablest men lost their seats. Never had there been such a hecatomb. Clay and Johnson managed to retain their seats, but by the closest of margins. It was the only time in his life that Clay was actually in danger, and when he was obliged to make personal appeals for votes in a manner that he would at all other times have considered undignified. The people of Kentucky were not much used to money, though they lived well. To them fifteen hundred dollars a year for sitting in Congress and doing nothing but talk seemed an enormous compensation, and their wrath was mighty and to a large extent prevailed. One of the victims who went down under the unpopularity of the measure said that every grand-jury was compelled to bring in a presentment against it, and that no man could be appointed constable or road juror who did not hold up his hand and solemnly abjure the Compensation law. The people were in a state of frenzy, and there must have been a psychological reason for the position they assumed. It came just at a crucial moment when the revolutionary spirit was abroad, and this was seized upon as an excuse

for vengeance. This was the more regrettable, as the Fourteenth Congress was equal in ability to any that had ever sat up to that time, and many of its able men retired never came again into public life.

It was during this campaign that the celebrated incident of Clay and the hunter occurred which used to be familiar to every school-boy. Clay was having a hard time on the stump and needed all his arts to secure votes. At every gathering he addressed the people in a way that fitted their peculiarities, and to individuals he advanced arguments which seemed to be convincing. Meeting an old hunter, the latter informed Clay that he had always supported him before, but could not do so now on account of the Compensation law, which was all the more odious to the people because it applied to the session of the existing Congress and was familiarly called the back-pay bill. Clay said to him,—

"My friend, have you a good rifle?"

"Yes."

"Did it ever flash?"

"Yes, but only once."

"What did you do with the rifle when it flashed; throw it away?"

"No, I picked the flint and tried again."

"Have I ever flashed except on the Compensation bill?"

"No."

"Well, will you throw me away?"

"No, Mr. Clay; I will pick the flint and try you again."

It was by such arts as these that Clay, who had before been elected without opposition, was finally chosen by a small majority.

When Congress met there was nothing to do but repeal the law, which was done for the future, but the members retained the money they had voted them-

selves. This uprising of the people led old John Randolph to remark,—

"Who would have believed? Who would have believed that the people of the United States would have borne all the privations and losses of the late war, and of the measures that led to it; that they would have quietly regarded a national debt, swelled to an amount unknown—to an amount greater than the whole expense of our seven years' war; that they would have seen the election of President taken out of their hands (by the caucus); that they would have borne with abuse and peculation through every department of the government; and that the great leviathan which slept under all these grievances should be roused into action by the Fifteen-hundred-dollar Law?"

And Clay was obliged to admit that during his entire canvass he had not met a single person of any party or of any description who was not opposed to the act. One would have thought that in 1874 Congress would not have repeated the blunder, but it did, with precisely the same results. Congressmen now, as a rule, cannot live on their salary, but are afraid to vote themselves adequate pay.

Clay was re-elected Speaker, but he was somewhat chastened by the experience and it was never repeated. While in the House he made his celebrated speech in favor of Grecian liberty, which drew from Lafayette a commendatory letter, saying that the United States was the natural and proper champion of the Hellenes, but nothing ever came of the matter. When Lafayette came to this country, Clay, as Speaker, received him in a most felicitous speech. Later he visited Clay at Ashland and presented him with the Masonic apron which he wore when he laid the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill monument, and it is still in possession of his daughter-in-law, Mrs. John M. Clay.

Up to a short time before the inauguration of Monroe, Clay expected to be Secretary of State. He

felt that his services demanded the position, which was looked upon as bringing with it the succession. He was offered another portfolio, but declined, and was much disgruntled over Adams's preferment. It had been customary for the incoming President to be inaugurated in the House of Representatives; but on this occasion some row arose, the use of the hall was refused, and the inauguration was in the open air, where it has since been held. Clay felt so badly over his failure that he would not even attend the ceremonies.

This is one of the occasions when Clay shows to little advantage. It was a pettiness of which he was not often guilty, and such incidents can easily be magnified beyond their importance. It was a sort of feminine petulance of which Clay was doubtless ashamed later, but it did not prevent him from giving the administration very sharp digs on many occasions. This was very human, even if not entirely just.

Matters nearer home than Greece received Clay's attention, and he spoke freely on the subjects at a time when they embarrassed the administration a good deal, for which Clay cared not a whit. The negotiations over Florida had dragged along until finally a treaty had been made ceding the peninsula to this country. The Senate promptly ratified it; but the King of Spain, for one reason or another, held back his approval beyond the date set in the treaty for the exchange of ratifications. Clay had been burning with indignation ever since the administration, under the lead of Monroe and most of his Cabinet, and against the advice of Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, had fixed our southwest boundary at the Sabine and thus given away Texas. It appeared in later years that Spain actually offered more than this, and we could easily have secured the line of the Rio Grande, for which we afterwards waged

an unholy war. Monroe had seen the rising jealousy of the East, and especially of New England, over the increase of territory, and, noting that there was liable to be trouble, he had insisted on a sacrifice and accepted the Sabine, the present western boundary of Louisiana, most of the Cabinet, including Calhoun, agreeing. When the time had passed for exchange of ratifications, Clay wanted to have the whole treaty rejected and a new one made to embrace Texas, but it was in vain. The treaty was finally ratified and Texas was lost. Although slavery was more or less prominent in the debates, the principal contention of the older States was that it meant to them a loss of political power. The New England and other people felt over the situation as Europe has for centuries over the balance of power. There was a feeling that the westward march would be so rapid and so strong that the people beyond the Alleghanies would soon rule the country and the East would be relegated to the background. The South had enjoyed the Presidency from the beginning, with the exception of a single term, and the only New England President had been rejected for a slave-holding Virginian and "an atheist," so that in the East it was felt that a halt must be called. We all know how foolish were these fears, but that made them none the less real. We should also remember that this was before there was a railway or telegraph line in the land and when steamboats were just beginning to plough the rivers. The West seemed a vast, terrible, and distant place whose domination was feared by cultured men of the East.

Clay now turned his attention to the South, and was a warm advocate and defender of the revolutionary governments set up in the lower Americas. He spoke with great candor for freedom from the yoke of Spain, and made the path of Monroe anything

but pleasant, the more so because the latter knew now that Clay had his eye on the succession. Clay, however, did no damage to the administration, although he encouraged the revolutionists, who wrote him many letters and were of service to him later.

The matter came to a climax in the House when the President, who had without specific authority named a commission to South America to investigate and see whether the governments were stable enough to recognize, asked for an appropriation to cover the expense. Clay opposed it on the ground that the nominations had been unauthorized, but offered an amendment appropriating a sum for a regular minister. There was something of the buccaneer about this action of Clay. His position as Speaker was one of vast importance both at home and in a representative capacity abroad. It was aimed not only to do the South Americans good, but as well to give a drubbing to Adams and Monroe. In one of his fiery speeches for liberty he woke the echoes of patriotism, but did not succeed in carrying his purpose, which would, indeed, have so embarrassed the administration as to cause serious difficulty. But in the end Clay had his way, the governments were recognized, and when Secretary of State he had some revenge in a quiet fashion.

If at this time any one had told Henry Clay that his most formidable foe in politics was his Tennessee neighbor, General Andrew Jackson, he would have laughed him to scorn. Nothing was further from his own mind, or that of Jackson or any one else, than that the hero of New Orleans was to become the most virile force in politics for many years to come. Clay admired the old hero and was friendly to him, but he could not approve of the manner in which he had pushed into Spanish territory, seized Spanish forts, and hanged British citizens.

Had he known all that was to follow, Clay might or might not have held his peace at a time when there was no occasion for him to say anything. A resolution of censure on Jackson's conduct was offered in the House, and Clay must needs come down from the chair and deliver a well-tempered speech in its favor. He showed clearly that Jackson had violated the laws of nations and was likely to get us into trouble. All that Clay said was true; but, as it turned out, the speech was inexpedient, and that seems to be one of the reasons why Clay made it. Fate ever led him in this direction. The resolution failed.

The Missouri Compromise and Clay's candidacy for the Presidency belong to other chapters of this work. When Clay left Congress in 1825 it was with a first-class reputation as a speaker and legislator. He was easily the leading man of the West, one of the most popular in the country, and, but for the scandal which followed, known as the "Corrupt Bargain," it is difficult to see where Clay's popularity would have ended. He was admired by his political foes, respected everywhere for his talents, and his human frailties did not in the least diminish the love shown him by many friends. Indeed, when we compare, either at this time or at a later date, the austere Adams, who had all the virtues, with Clay, who was latitudinarian in so many respects, it is evident that human beings, while they may admire perfection in the abstract, care much more for the full-blooded, noble-hearted man with failings than for the anchorite. And from the effect of these weaknesses Clay was able to recover with remarkable ease at all times.

On a certain occasion he had been up all night playing cards and doubtless indulging rather freely in liquor. A friend said to him, "How can you,

under the circumstances, preside over the House to-day?"

"Come and see," said Clay.

He went, and with astonishment saw Clay preside with perfect composure, great dignity, and much parliamentary skill over a session that was noteworthy for the amount of business transacted.

The fact that Clay could do such things was remarkable, but it was hardly well for his physical and moral make-up that it was possible. It made him too self-confident, too daring.

IX

CLAY AS A DUELLIST

In spite of his singularly affable manners, Clay was a good deal of a fighter. Thrice he was involved in "affairs of honor," in which, fortunately, the minimum amount of blood was spilled. In addition, he had several encounters with his fists, and was "quick in choler" at all times. This was the more reprehensible in him because he fully appreciated the folly of such conduct, moralized on it in private and public, and fought again when an accommodation was possible. His conduct was due not so much to the "imperious custom" of the time as to his own temperament. His warm blood revolted at insult, actual or fancied, and he was ever ready to give "the satisfaction usually accorded gentlemen."

In these days we clearly appreciate how absurd was "the code" and the system which underlay it. If a man wrongs me to the extent that his life is properly forfeit, I now kill him without giving the outlaw a chance. Under the old system, the most detestable villain had an equal chance (often a better) with the innocent and aggrieved. Virginians and Carolinians were particularly devoted to this rule of barbarism, and no man could expect to be respected, especially in the West, if he declined "satisfaction" on every proffered occasion.

The first instance of Clay's appearance on "the field of honor" was at twenty-six, while a member of the Kentucky Legislature, and grew out of his chivalry in the Bush case. Colonel Joseph Hamilton

Daviess having assaulted Bush, a Frankfort tavern-keeper, no one would assume his cause because the aggressor was the District Attorney of the Federal Court, and a power in the community. Clay took up the cause of Bush. When defending the poor, the friendless, and the oppressed, Clay was always at his best. He was a real chivalrous knight at a time when the bogus variety was plenteous. In conducting the case, Clay was as fearless as a knight-errant. Once enlisted in a humane cause, nothing deterred him. It became necessary for him, in accordance with the usages of the time, to speak plainly about Colonel Daviess. That gentleman was wroth and demanded "satisfaction." Clay responded promptly, and the parties met on "the field of honor," but the seconds secured an accommodation. In this Clay only did what custom required, and is hardly reprehensible. A few months later Hamilton fell at Weehawken, and thereafter the moral sense of the country was so aroused that no subsequent duellist was held entirely guiltless. Thereafter the highest moral courage was often required in a refusal to connive at murder; but Clay, convinced as he was of the absurdity and criminality of the system, was not equal to the task of refusal,—not after a public speech denouncing the custom.

Clay's next appearance on "the field of honor" was in reality due to his ardent championship of American industries, and, to a limited extent, he was the first martyr to "the American system of protection to home industries." In 1808, when the foreign troubles and the Embargo were the chief causes of political comment, Clay, while in the Kentucky Legislature, appeared dressed in homespun. He had a colloquy with Humphrey Marshall, then the most distinguished of Kentuckians, who was also in the Legislature as a Federalist. Clay championed a

resolution endorsing Jefferson and his policy, which Marshall opposed. Then Clay went further, and offered a resolution recommending to all members of the Legislature to wear only homespun. For this he was denounced by Marshall as a cheap demagogue, and a lively interchange of language followed, ending in arrangements for a duel. The meeting was held and two shots were exchanged, each of the combatants receiving a slight flesh wound. The seconds decided that "honor was satisfied," and the pistols were boxed up. This affair had some excuse; but Clay's last and most famous meeting is not in any wise to his credit, as he himself admitted.

As this, according to Benton, who figured in it largely and was an expert in the code, was the last "high-toned duel," and in fact the "highest-toned" he ever witnessed, it deserves more than passing mention; and it is of particular interest that Benton felt called upon to write out the complete details. In 1826, John Randolph of Roanoke was approaching the end of that singularly erratic career which is one of the most curious and entertaining in history. There is no doubt that at times he was over the borders of responsibility, largely because of his long-continued custom of speaking and otherwise indulging himself without restraint. Jefferson had caused his overthrow from power in the House, and Clay, as Speaker, had reduced him to a nonentity, except as *vox et præterea nihil.* The voice still lived, and in the early months of John Quincy Adams's administration Randolph found it a pleasing custom to hurl the vials of his wrath upon the two parties to the alleged "corrupt bargain." The limit was reached when in a speech he was reported to have referred (during a debate on the Panama Congress resolution in the Senate, of which Randolph was for a brief time a member), to Adams and Clay

as "the coalition of Blifil and Black George,—the combination, unheard of until then, of the Puritan with the blackleg."

This was harsh talk, almost as bad as some of the expressions which in recent years have defiled the Senate but have fallen harmless on the ears of the assailed. It is a curious fact that, since men have ceased to be held responsible under "the code" for their words, they, as a rule, have ceased to make personal attacks, showing that the system grew by feeding on its victims, and that actually the code led men to court duels rather than to avoid them.

Whether or not Randolph ever uttered such language, coupled with the statement that he was responsible for his words, is uncertain. The official record, not then verbatim, shows nothing of the sort, but it was notoriously unreliable as to verbal accuracy. Benton, who was present, says he heard nothing of the sort, and, as he was a relative of Mrs. Clay, he probably would have noticed any such aspersions. Randolph later denied them. Still, the direct evidence was enough to inflame Clay, who, as Secretary of State, was having a hard task to maintain himself against the aspersions so commonly made as to the corrupt bargain with Adams. Details of this belong to another chapter, but it is of interest here to note that Clay had pledged himself to fight a duel with the anonymous member of Congress who had published in a Philadelphia newspaper what purported to be an authoritative and circumstantial account of the corrupt bargain. As it turned out, Clay felt he had no cause to fight the author, who was only a stool-pigeon for others, and he selected Randolph as his antagonist. In this he was reprehensible. Blood could not settle this quarrel, and Randolph was no longer intellectually or morally a foeman to be called out.

Clay did not hesitate. He sent his friend, General Jesup, to interrogate Randolph, at the same time giving him the usual letter to be handed over if the interview was not satisfactory. No duello was ever more involved in fine considerations than this, which seemed to exhaust every technicality and point of honor in the code. As this was the most remarkable bloodless duel which ever took place in our political history, and one of the last, it is of more than ordinary interest. Benton acted as mutual friend throughout the affair, and left on record an account of it which is not only of historical interest, but is a unique piece of literature which is almost forgotten and is seldom read. No apology is, therefore, necessary for quoting largely from his account, since he writes with the skill of an expert and the joy of a connoisseur. This is Benton's account:

"It was Saturday, the first day of April, towards noon, the Senate not being that day in session, that Mr. Randolph came to my room at Brown's Hotel, and (without explaining the reason of the question) asked me if I was a blood-relation of Mrs. Clay? I answered that I was, and he immediately replied that that put an end to a request which he had wished to make of me; and then went on to tell me that he had just received a challenge from Mr. Clay, had accepted it, was ready to go out, and would apply to Col. Tatnall to be his second. Before leaving, he told me he would make my bosom the depository of a secret which he should commit to no other person; it was, that he did not intend to fire at Mr. Clay. He told it to me because he wanted a witness of his intention, and did not mean to tell it to his second or any body else; and enjoined inviolable secrecy until the duel was over. This was the first notice I had of the affair. The circumstances of the delivery of the challenge I had from Gen. Jesup, Mr. Clay's second, and they were so perfectly characteristic of Mr. Randolph that I give them in detail, and in the General's own words:

"'I was unable to see Mr. Randolph until the morning of the 1st of April, when I called on him for the purpose of

delivering the note. Previous to presenting it, however, I thought it proper to ascertain from Mr. Randolph himself whether the information which Mr. Clay had received—that he considered himself personally accountable for the attack on him—was correct. I accordingly informed Mr. Randolph that I was the bearer of a message from Mr. Clay in consequence of an attack which he had made upon his private as well as public character in the Senate; that I was aware no one had the right to question him out of the Senate for any thing said in debate, unless he chose voluntarily to waive his privileges as a member of that body. Mr. Randolph replied, that the constitution did protect him, but he would never shield himself under such a subterfuge as the pleading of his privilege as a senator from Virginia; that he did hold himself accountable to Mr. Clay; but he said that gentleman had first two pledges to redeem: one, that he had bound himself to fight any member of the House of Representatives who should acknowledge himself the author of a certain publication in a Philadelphia paper; and the other, that he stood pledged to establish certain facts in regard to a great man, whom he would not name; but, he added, he could receive no verbal message from Mr. Clay—that any message from him must be in writing. I replied that I was not authorized by Mr. Clay to enter into or receive any verbal explanation—that the inquiries I had made were for my own satisfaction and upon my own responsibility—that the only message of which I was the bearer was in writing. I then presented the note, and remarked that I knew nothing of Mr. Clay's pledges; but that if they existed as he (Mr. Randolph) understood them, and he was aware of them when he made the attack complained of, he could not avail himself of them—that by making the attack I thought he had waived them himself. He said he had not the remotest intention of taking advantage of the pledges referred to; that he had mentioned them merely to remind me that he was waiving his privilege, not only as a senator from Virginia, but as a private gentleman; that he was ready to respond to Mr. Clay, and would be obliged to me if I would bear his note in reply; and that he would in the course of the day look out for a friend. I declined being the bearer of his note, but informed him my only reason for declining was, that I thought he owed it to himself to consult his friends before taking so important a step. He seized my hand, saying, "You are right, sir. I thank you for the suggestion; but as you do not take my note, you must not be impatient if you should not hear from

me to-day. I now think of only two friends, and there are circumstances connected with one of them which may deprive me of his services, and the other is in bad health—he was sick yesterday, and may not be out to-day." I assured him that any reasonable time which he might find it necessary to take would be satisfactory. I took leave of him ; and it is due to his memory to say that his bearing was, throughout the interview, that of a high-toned, chivalrous gentleman of the old school.'

"These were the circumstances of the delivery of the challenge, and the only thing necessary to give them their character is to recollect that, with this prompt acceptance and positive refusal to explain, and this extra cut about the two pledges, there was a perfect determination not to fire at Mr. Clay. That determination rested on two grounds : first, an entire unwillingness to hurt Mr. Clay ; and next, a conviction that to return the fire would be to answer, and would be an implied acknowledgment of Mr. Clay's right to make him answer. This he would not do, neither by implication nor in words. He denied the right of any person to question him out of the Senate for words spoken within it. He took a distinction between man and senator. As senator he had a constitutional immunity, given for a wise purpose, and which he would neither surrender nor compromise; as individual he was ready to give satisfaction for what was deemed an injury. He would receive, but not return a fire. It was as much as to say : Mr. Clay may fire at me for what has offended him ; I will not, by returning the fire, admit his right to do so. This was a subtle distinction, and that in a case of life and death, and not very clear to the common intellect ; but to Mr. Randolph both clear and convincing. His allusion to the 'two pledges unredeemed,' which he might have plead in bar to Mr. Clay's challenge, and would not, was another sarcastic cut at Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay, while rendering satisfaction for cuts already given. The 'member of the House' was Mr. George Kremer, of Pennsylvania, who, at the time of the presidential election in the House of Representatives, had avowed himself to be the author of an anonymous publication, the writer of which Mr. Clay had threatened to call to account if he would avow himself—and did not. The 'great man' was President Adams, with whom Mr. Clay had had a newspaper controversy, involving a question of fact,—which had been postponed. The cause of this sarcastic cut, and of all the keen personality in the Panama speech, was the belief that the President and Secretary, the latter especially,

encouraged the newspapers in their interest to attack him, which they did incessantly; and he chose to overlook the editors and retaliate upon the instigators, as he believed them to be. This he did to his heart's content in that speech—and to their great annoyance, as the coming of the challenge proved. The 'two friends' alluded to were Colonel Tatnall and myself, and the circumstances which might disqualify one of the two were those of my relationship to Mrs. Clay, of which he did not know the degree, and whether of affinity or consanguinity—considering the first no obstacle, the other a complete bar to my appearing as his second—holding as he did, with the tenacity of an Indian, to the obligations of blood, and laying but little stress on marriage connections. His affable reception and courteous demeanor to General Jesup were according to his own high breeding and the decorum which belonged to such occasions. A duel in the circle to which he belonged was 'an affair of honor;' and high honor, according to its code, must pervade every part of it. General Jesup had come upon an unpleasant business. Mr. Randolph determined to put him at his ease; and did it so effectually as to charm him into admiration. The whole plan of his conduct, down to contingent details, was cast in his mind instantly, as if by intuition, and never departed from. The acceptance, the refusal to explain, the determination not to fire, the first and second choice of a friend, and the circumstances which might disqualify one and delay the other, the additional cut, and the resolve to fall, if he fell, on the soil of Virginia—was all, to his mind, a single emanation, the flash of an instant. He needed no consultations, no deliberations to arrive at all these important conclusions. I dwell upon these small circumstances because they are characteristic, and show the man—a man who belongs to history, and had his own history, and should be known as he was. That character can only be shown in his own conduct, his own words and acts; and this duel with Mr. Clay illustrates it at many points. It is in that point of view that I dwell upon circumstances which might seem trivial, but which are not so, being illustrative of character and significant to their smallest particulars.

"The acceptance of the challenge was in keeping with the whole proceeding—prompt in the agreement to meet, exact in protesting against the right to call him out, clear in the waiver of his constitutional privilege, brief and cogent in presenting the case as one of some reprehension—the case of a member of an administration challenging a senator for words

spoken in debate of that administration; and all in brief, terse, and superlatively decorous language. It ran thus:

"'Mr. Randolph accepts the challenge of Mr. Clay. At the same time he protests against the right of any minister of the Executive Government of the United States to hold him responsible for words spoken in debate, as a senator from Virginia, in crimination of such minister, or the administration under which he shall have taken office. Colonel Tatnall, of Georgia, the bearer of this letter, is authorized to arrange with General Jesup (the bearer of Mr. Clay's challenge) the terms of the meeting to which Mr. Randolph is invited by that note.'

"This protest which Mr. Randolph entered against the right of Mr. Clay to challenge him led to an explanation between their mutual friends on that delicate point—a point which concerned the independence of debate, the privileges of the Senate, the immunity of a member, and the sanctity of the constitution. It was a point which Mr. Clay felt; and the explanation which was had between the mutual friends presented an excuse, if not a justification, for his proceeding. He had been informed that Mr. Randolph, in his speech, had avowed his responsibility to Mr. Clay, and waived his privilege—a thing which, if it had been done, would have been a defiance, and stood for an invitation to Mr. Clay to send a challenge. Mr. Randolph, through Colonel Tatnall, disavowed that imputed avowal, and confined his waiver of privilege to the time of the delivery of the challenge, and in answer to an inquiry before it was delivered.

"The following are the communications between the respective seconds on this point:

"'In regard to the protest with which Mr. Randolph's note concludes, it is due to Mr. Clay to say that he had been informed Mr. Randolph did, and would, hold himself responsible to him for any observations he might make in relation to him; and that I (General Jesup) distinctly understood from Mr. Randolph, before I delivered the note of Mr. Clay, that he waived his privilege as a senator.'

"To this Colonel Tatnall replied:

"'As this expression (did, and would, hold himself responsible, &c.) may be construed to mean that Mr. Randolph had given this intimation not only before called upon, but in such a manner as to throw out to Mr. Clay something like an invitation to make such a call, I have, on the part of Mr. Randolph, to disavow any disposition, when expressing his readiness to waive his privilege as a senator from Virginia,

to invite, in any case, a call upon him for personal satisfaction. The concluding paragraph of your note, I presume, is intended to show merely that you did not present a note, such as that of Mr. Clay to Mr. Randolph, until you had ascertained his willingness to waive his privilege as a senator. This I infer, as it was in your recollection that the expression of such a readiness on the part of Mr. Randolph was in reply to an inquiry on that point made by yourself.'

"Thus an irritating circumstance in the affair was virtually negatived, and its offensive import wholly disavowed. For my part, I do not believe that Mr. Randolph used such language in his speech. I have no recollection of having heard it. The published report of the speech, as taken down by the reporters and not revised by the speaker, contains nothing of it. Such gasconade was foreign to Mr. Randolph's character. The occasion was not one in which these sort of defiances are thrown out, which are either to purchase a cheap reputation when it is known they will be despised, or to get an advantage in extracting a challenge when there is a design to kill. Mr. Randolph had none of these views with respect to Mr. Clay. He had no desire to fight him, or to hurt him, or gain cheap reputation by appearing to bully him. He was above all that, and had settled accounts with him in his speech, and wanted no more. I do not believe it was said; but there was a part of the speech which might have received a wrong application, and led to the erroneous report: a part which applied to a quoted passage in Mr. Adams's Panama message, which he condemned and denounced, and dared the President and his friends to defend. His words were, as reported unrevised: 'Here I plant my foot; here I fling defiance right into his (the President's) teeth; here I throw the gauntlet to him and the bravest of his compeers to come forward and defend these lines,' &c. A very palpable defiance this, but very different from a summons to personal combat, and from what was related to Mr. Clay. It was an unfortunate report, doubtless the effect of indistinct apprehension, and the more to be regretted as, after having been a main cause inducing the challenge, the disavowal could not stop it.

"Thus the agreement for the meeting was absolute; and, according to the expectation of the principals, the meeting itself would be immediately; but their seconds, from the most laudable feelings, determined to delay it, with the hope to prevent it, and did keep it off a week, admitting me to a participation in the good work, as being already privy to the

affair and friendly to both parties. The challenge stated no specific ground of offence, specified no exceptionable words. It was peremptory and general, for an 'unprovoked attack on his (Mr. Clay's) character,' and it dispensed with explanations by alleging that the notoriety and indisputable existence of the injury superseded the necessity for them. Of course this demand was bottomed on a report of the words spoken—a verbal report, the full daily publication of the debates having not then begun—and that verbal report was of a character greatly to exasperate Mr. Clay. It stated that in the course of the debate Mr. Randolph said :

"'That a letter from General Salazar, the Mexican Minister at Washington, submitted by the Executive to the Senate, bore the ear-mark of having been manufactured or forged by the Secretary of State, and denounced the administration as a corrupt coalition between the puritan and blackleg ; and added at the same time, that he (Mr. Randolph) held himself personally responsible for all that he had said.'

"This was the report to Mr. Clay, and upon which he gave the absolute challenge, and received the absolute acceptance, which shut out all inquiry between the principals into the causes of the quarrel. The seconds determined to open it, and to attempt an accommodation, or a peaceable determination of the difficulty. In consequence, General Jesup stated the complaint in a note to Colonel Tatnall, thus :

"'The injury of which Mr. Clay complains consists in this, that Mr. Randolph has charged him with having forged or manufactured a paper connected with the Panama mission ; also, that he has applied to him in debate the epithet of blackleg. The explanation which I consider necessary, is that Mr. Randolph declare that he had no intention of charging Mr. Clay, either in his public or private capacity, with forging or falsifying any paper, or misrepresenting any fact ; and also that the term blackleg was not intended to apply to him.'

"To this exposition of the grounds of the complaint Col. Tatnall answered :

"'Mr. Randolph informs me that the words used by him in debate were as follows : "That I thought it would be in my power to show evidence sufficiently presumptive to satisfy a Charlotte (county) jury that this invitation was manufactured here—that Salazar's letter struck me as bearing a strong likeness in point of style to the other papers. I did not undertake to prove this, but expressed my suspicion that the fact was so. I applied to the administration the epithet,

puritanic-diplomatic-blacklegged administration.'' Mr. Randolph, in giving these words as those uttered by him in debate, is unwilling to afford any explanation as to their meaning and application.'

''In this answer Mr. Randolph remained upon his original ground of refusing to answer out of the Senate for words spoken within it. In other respects the statement of the words actually spoken greatly ameliorated the offensive report, the coarse and insulting words, 'forging and falsifying,' being disavowed, as in fact they were not used, and are not to be found in the published report. The speech was a bitter philippic, and intended to be so, taking for its point the alleged coalition between Mr. Clay and Mr. Adams with respect to the election, and their efforts to get up a popular question contrary to our policy of non-entanglement with foreign nations, in sending ministers to the congress of the American States of Spanish origin at the Isthmus of Panama. I heard it all, and, though sharp and cutting, I think it might have been heard, had he been present, without any manifestation of resentment by Mr. Clay. The part which he took so seriously to heart, that of having the Panama invitations manufactured in his office, was to my mind nothing more than attributing to him a diplomatic superiority which enabled him to obtain from the South American ministers the invitations that he wanted; and not at all that they were spurious fabrications. As to the expression, 'blackleg and puritan,' it was merely a sarcasm to strike by antithesis, and which, being without foundation, might have been disregarded. I presented these views to the parties, and if they had come from Mr. Randolph they might have been sufficient; but he was inexorable, and would not authorize a word to be said beyond what he had written.

''All hope of accommodation having vanished, the seconds proceeded to arrange for the duel. The afternoon of Saturday, the 8th of April, was fixed upon for the time; the right bank of the Potomac, within the State of Virginia, above the Little Falls bridge, was the place—pistols the weapons—distance ten paces; each party to be attended by two seconds and a surgeon, and myself at liberty to attend as a mutual friend. There was to be no practising with pistols, and there was none; and the words 'one,' 'two,' 'three,' 'stop,' after the word 'fire,' were, by agreement between the seconds, and for the humane purpose of reducing the result as near as possible to chance, to be given out in quick succession. The Virginia side of the Potomac

was taken at the instance of Mr. Randolph. He went out as a Virginia senator, refusing to compromise that character, and, if he fell in defence of its rights, Virginia soil was to him the chosen ground to receive his blood. There was a statute of the State against duelling within her limits; but, as he merely went out to receive a fire without returning it, he deemed that no fighting, and consequently no breach of her statute. This reason for choosing Virginia could only be explained to me, as I alone was the depository of his secret.

"The week's delay which the seconds had contrived was about expiring. It was Friday evening, or rather night, when I went to see Mr. Clay for the last time before the duel. There had been some alienation between us since the time of the presidential election in the House of Representatives, and I wished to give evidence that there was nothing personal in it. The family were in the parlor—company present—and some of it staid late. The youngest child, I believe James, went to sleep on the sofa—a circumstance which availed me for a purpose the next day. Mrs. Clay was, as always since the death of her daughters, the picture of desolation, but calm, conversable, and without the slightest apparent consciousness of the impending event. When all were gone, and she also had left the parlor, I did what I came for, and said to Mr. Clay, that, notwithstanding our late political differences, my personal feelings towards him were the same as formerly, and that in whatever concerned his life or honor my best wishes were with him. He expressed his gratification at the visit and the declaration, and said it was what he would have expected of me. We parted at midnight.

"Saturday, the 8th of April—the day for the duel—had come, and almost the hour. It was noon, and the meeting was to take place at 4½ o'clock. I had gone to see Mr. Randolph before the hour, and for a purpose; and, besides, it was so far on the way, as he lived half way to Georgetown, and we had to pass through that place to cross the Potomac into Virginia at the Little Falls bridge. I had heard nothing from him on the point of not returning the fire since the first communication to that effect, eight days before. I had no reason to doubt the steadiness of his determination, but felt a desire to have fresh assurance of it after so many days' delay and so near approach of the trying moment. I knew it would not do to ask him the question—any question which would imply a doubt of his word. His sensitive feelings would be hurt and annoyed at it. So I fell upon a scheme

HENRY CLAY'S BEDSTEAD

(This bed was used by Mr. and Mrs. Clay for over fifty years. It was a custom at Ashland that the water pitcher should always stand at the foot of the bed. The bed and accessories are now in possession of Mrs. John M. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky.)

to get at the inquiry without seeming to make it. I told him of my visit to Mr. Clay the night before—of the late sitting—the child asleep—the unconscious tranquillity of Mrs. Clay; and added, I could not help reflecting how different all that might be the next night. He understood me perfectly, and immediately said, with a quietude of look and expression which seemed to rebuke an unworthy doubt, 'I SHALL DO NOTHING TO DISTURB THE SLEEP OF THE CHILD OR THE REPOSE OF THE MOTHER,' and went on with his employment—(his seconds being engaged in their preparations in a different room)—which was, making codicils to his will, all in the way of remembrance to friends; the bequests slight in value, but invaluable in tenderness of feeling and beauty of expression, and always appropriate to the receiver. To Mr. Macon he gave some English shillings, to keep the game when he played whist. His namesake, John Randolph Bryan, then at school in Baltimore, and since married to his niece, had been sent for to see him, but sent off before the hour for going out, to save the boy from a possible shock at seeing him brought back. He wanted some gold—that coin not being then in circulation, and only to be obtained by favor or purchase—and sent his faithful man, Johnny, to the United States Branch Bank to get a few pieces, American being the kind asked for. Johnny returned without the gold, and delivered the excuse that the bank had none. Instantly Mr. Randolph's clear, silver-toned voice was heard above its natural pitch, exclaiming, 'Their name is legion! and they are liars from the beginning. Johnny, bring me my horse.' His own saddle-horse was brought him—for he never rode Johnny's, nor Johnny his, though both, and all his hundred horses, were of the finest English blood—and rode off to the bank down Pennsylvania avenue, now Corcoran & Rigg's—Johnny following, as always, forty paces behind. Arrived at the bank, this scene, according to my informant, took place:

"'Mr. Randolph asked for the state of his account, was shown it, and found to be some four thousand dollars in his favor. He asked for it. The teller took up packages of bills, and civilly asked in what sized notes he would have it. "I want money," said Mr. Randolph, putting emphasis on the word; and at that time it required a bold man to intimate that United States Bank notes were not money. The teller, beginning to understand him, and willing to make sure, said, inquiringly, "You want silver?" "I want my

money !'' was the reply. Then the teller, lifting boxes to the counter, said politely, "Have you a cart, Mr. Randolph, to put it in?" "That is my business, sir," said he. By that time the attention of the cashier (Mr. Richard Smith) was attracted to what was going on, who came up and, understanding the question and its cause, told Mr. Randolph there was a mistake in the answer given to his servant ; that they had gold, and he should have what he wanted.'

"In fact, he had only applied for a few pieces, which he wanted for a special purpose. This brought about a compromise. The pieces of gold were received, the cart and the silver dispensed with ; but the account in bank was closed, and a check taken for the amount on New-York. He returned and delivered me a sealed paper, which I was to open if he was killed—give back to him if he was not ; also an open slip, which I was to read before I got to the ground. This slip was a request to feel in his left breeches pocket, if he was killed, and find so many pieces of gold—I believe nine—take three for myself, and give the same number to Tatnall and Hamilton each, to make seals to wear in remembrance of him. We were all three at Mr. Randolph's lodgings then, and soon set out, Mr. Randolph and his seconds in a carriage, I following him on horseback.

"I have already said that the count was to be quick after giving the word 'fire,' and for a reason which could not be told to the principals. To Mr. Randolph, who did not mean to fire, and who, though agreeing to be shot at, had no desire to be hit, this rapidity of counting out the time and quick arrival at the command 'stop,' presented no objection. With Mr. Clay it was different. With him it was all a real transaction, and gave rise to some proposal for more deliberateness in counting off the time ; which, being communicated to Col. Tatnall, and by him to Mr. Randolph, had an ill effect upon his feelings, and, aided by an untoward accident on the ground, unsettled for a moment the noble determination which he had formed not to fire at Mr. Clay. I now give the words of Gen. Jesup :

"'When I repeated to Mr. Clay the "word," in the manner in which it would be given, he expressed some apprehension that, as he was not accustomed to the use of the pistol, he might not be able to fire within the time, and for that reason alone desired that it might be prolonged. I mentioned to Col. Tatnall the desire of Mr. Clay. He replied, "If you insist upon it, the time must be prolonged, but I should very much regret it." I informed him I did not insist upon pro-

longing the time, and I was sure Mr. Clay would acquiesce. The original agreement was carried out.'

"I knew nothing of this until it was too late to speak with the seconds or principals. I had crossed the Little Falls bridge just after them, and come to the place where the servants and carriages had stopped. I saw none of the gentlemen, and supposed they had all gone to the spot where the ground was being marked off; but on speaking to Johnny, Mr. Randolph, who was still in his carriage and heard my voice, looked out from the window, and said to me: 'Colonel, since I saw you, and since I have been in this carriage, I have heard something which may make me change my determination. Colonel Hamilton will give you a note which will explain it.' Colonel Hamilton was then in the carriage, and gave me the note, in the course of the evening, of which Mr. Randolph spoke. I readily comprehended that this possible change of determination related to his firing; but the emphasis with which he pronounced the word 'may' clearly showed that his mind was undecided, and left it doubtful whether he would fire or not. No further conversation took place between us; the preparations for the duel were finished; the parties went to their places; and I went forward to a piece of rising ground, from which I could see what passed and hear what was said. The faithful Johnny followed me close, speaking not a word, but evincing the deepest anxiety for his beloved master. The place was a thick forest, and the immediate spot a little depression, or basin, in which the parties stood. The principals saluted each other courteously as they took their stands. Colonel Tatnall had won the choice of position, which gave to General Jesup the delivery of the word. They stood on a line east and west—a small stump just behind Mr. Clay; a low gravelly bank rose just behind Mr. Randolph. This latter asked General Jesup to repeat the word as he would give it; and while in the act of doing so, and Mr. Randolph adjusting the butt of his pistol to his hand, the muzzle pointing downwards, and almost to the ground, it fired. Instantly Mr. Randolph turned to Colonel Tatnall and said: 'I protested against that hair-trigger.' Colonel Tatnall took blame to himself for having sprung the hair. Mr. Clay had not then received his pistol. Senator Johnson, of Louisiana (Josiah), one of his seconds, was carrying it to him, and still several steps from him. This untimely fire, though clearly an accident, necessarily gave rise to some remarks, and a species of inquiry, which was conducted with the utmost delicacy, but which, in itself, was of a nature to be inex-

pressibly painful to a gentleman's feelings. Mr. Clay stopped it with the generous remark, that the fire was clearly an accident: and it was so unanimously declared. Another pistol was immediately furnished, and exchange of shots took place, and, happily, without effect upon the persons. Mr. Randolph's bullet struck the stump behind Mr. Clay, and Mr. Clay's knocked up the earth and gravel behind Mr. Randolph, and in a line with the level of his hips, both bullets having gone so true and close that it was a marvel how they missed. The moment had come for me to interpose. I went in among the parties and offered my mediation; but nothing could be done. Mr. Clay said, with that wave of the hand with which he was accustomed to put away a trifle, 'THIS IS CHILD'S PLAY!' and required another fire. Mr. Randolph also demanded another fire. The seconds were directed to reload. While this was doing I prevailed on Mr. Randolph to walk away from his post, and renewed to him, more pressingly than ever, my importunities to yield to some accommodation; but I found him more determined than I had ever seen him, and for the first time impatient, and seemingly annoyed and dissatisfied at what I was doing. He was indeed annoyed and dissatisfied. The accidental fire of his pistol preyed upon his feelings. He was doubly chagrined at it, both as a circumstance susceptible in itself of an unfair interpretation, and as having been the immediate and controlling cause of his firing at Mr. Clay. He regretted this fire the instant it was over. He felt that it had subjected him to imputations from which he knew himself to be free—a desire to kill Mr. Clay, and a contempt for the laws of his beloved State; and the annoyances which he felt at these vexatious circumstances revived his original determination, and decided him irrevocably to carry it out.

"It was in this interval that he told me what he had heard since we parted, and to which he alluded when he spoke to me from the window of the carriage. It was to this effect: That he had been informed by Colonel Tatnall that it was proposed to give out the words with more deliberateness, so as to prolong the time for taking aim. This information grated harshly upon his feelings. It unsettled his purpose, and brought his mind to the inquiry (as he now told me, and as I found it expressed in the note which he had immediately written in pencil to apprise me of his possible change), whether, under these circumstances, he might not 'disable' his adversary? This note is so characteristic, and such an essential part of this affair, that I here give its very words, so far as relates to this point. It ran thus:

"'Information received from Colonel Tatnall since I got into the carriage may induce me to change my mind, of not returning Mr. Clay's fire. I seek not his death. I would not have his blood upon my hands—it will not be upon my soul if shed in self-defence—for the world. He has determined, by the use of a long, preparatory caution by words, to get time to kill me. May I not, then, disable him? Yes, if I please.'

"It has been seen, by the statement of General Jesup, already given, that this 'INFORMATION' was a misapprehension; that Mr. Clay had not applied for a prolongation of time for the purpose of getting sure aim, but only to enable his unused hand, long unfamiliar with the pistol, to fire within the limited time; that there was no prolongation, in fact, either granted or insisted upon; but he was in doubt, and General Jesup having won the word, he was having him repeat it in the way he was to give it out, when his finger touched the hair-trigger. How unfortunate that I did not know of this in time to speak to General Jesup, when one word from him would have set all right, and saved the imminent risks incurred! This inquiry, 'May I not disable him?' was still on Mr. Randolph's mind, and dependent for its solution on the rising incidents of the moment, when the accidental fire of his pistol gave the turn to his feelings which solved the doubt. But he declared to me that he had not aimed at the life of Mr. Clay; that he did not level as high as the knees—not higher than the knee-band; 'for it was no mercy to shoot a man in the knee:' that his only object was to disable him and spoil his aim. And then added, with a beauty of expression and a depth of feeling which no studied oratory can ever attain, and which I shall never forget, these impressive words: 'I would not have seen him fall mortally, or even doubtfully wounded, for all the land that is watered by the King of Floods and all his tributary streams.' He left me to resume his post, utterly refusing to explain out of the Senate any thing that he had said in it, and with the positive declaration that he would not return the next fire. I withdrew a little way into the woods, and kept my eyes fixed on Mr. Randolph, who I then knew to be the only one in danger. I saw him receive the fire of Mr. Clay, saw the gravel knocked up in the same place, saw Mr. Randolph raise his pistol—discharge it in the air; heard him say, 'I do not fire at you, Mr. Clay;' and immediately advancing and offering his hand. He was met in the same spirit. They met half way, shook hands, Mr. Randolph saying,

jocosely, 'You owe me a coat, Mr. Clay,—(the bullet had passed through the skirt of the coat, very near the hip)—to which Mr. Clay promptly and happily replied, 'I am glad the debt is no greater.' I had come up, and was prompt to proclaim what I had been obliged to keep secret for eight days. The joy of all was extreme at this happy termination of a most critical affair; and we immediately left, with lighter hearts than we brought. I stopped to sup with Mr. Randolph and his friends—none of us wanted dinner that day—and had a characteristic time of it. A runner came in from the bank to say that they had overpaid him, by mistake, $130 that day. He answered, 'I believe it is your rule not to correct mistakes, except at the time, and at your counter.' And with that answer the runner had to return. When gone Mr. Randolph said, 'I will pay it on Monday: people must be honest, if banks are not.' He asked for the sealed paper he had given me, opened it, took out a check for $1000, drawn in my favor, and with which I was requested to have him carried, if killed, to Virginia, and buried under his patrimonial oaks—not let him be buried at Washington, with an hundred hacks after him. He took the gold from his left breeches pocket, and said to us (Hamilton, Tatnall, and I), 'Gentlemen, Clay's bad shooting shan't rob you of your seals. I am going to London, and will have them made for you;' which he did, and most characteristically, so far as mine was concerned. He went to the Herald's office in London and inquired for the Benton family, of which I had often told him there was none, as we only dated on that side from my grandfather in North Carolina. But the name was found, and with it a coat of arms—among the quarterings a lion rampant. 'That is the family,' said he; and had the arms engraved on the seal, the same which I have since habitually worn; and added the motto: *Factis non verbis;* of which he was afterwards accustomed to say the *non* should be changed into *et.* But, enough. I run into these details, not merely to relate an event, but to show character; and if I have not done it, it is not for want of material, but of ability to use it.

"On Monday the parties exchanged cards, and social relations were formally and courteously restored. It was about the last high-toned duel that I have witnessed, and among the highest-toned that I have ever witnessed, and so happily conducted to a fortunate issue—a result due to the noble character of the seconds as well as to the generous and heroic spirit of the principals. Certainly duelling is bad, and

has been put down, but not quite so bad as its substitute—revolvers, bowie-knives, blackguarding, and street assassinations under the pretext of self-defence."

In this Clay does not show to advantage, and in later years it cost him support among the moral element of the community. It is a curious fact that on election day there were always many thousands who would vote against Clay for some real or alleged moral or political deficiency, and in favor of his opponent, who was ten times worse. This is a peculiar characteristic of democracy noted as far back as the days when Aristides was banished from Athens.

Later, Clay attempted to prevent the Graves-Cilley duel, in which the latter was killed. He supposed he had done so, but they stole a march on Clay while he lay ill in bed. It was unjustly charged against Clay that he did not prevent this meeting when he had the opportunity.

X

"THE CORRUPT BARGAIN"

It required the accumulation of a good many accidents and incidents to keep Henry Clay out of the Presidency, but there is no doubt that the one that counted for most and lasted longest was his conduct in securing the election of John Quincy Adams to the Presidency, and accepting the office of Secretary of State under him. This is what his enemies called "the corrupt bargain," and it was productive of remarkable results in politics. That there never was a corrupt bargain, nor anything like it, is now accepted as certain, as undoubted as any fact in history. Clay said there was not, and he never lied. Adams said there was not, and "he couldn't lie if he tried." Benton said there was not, and politically he was opposed to Clay all his days. Moreover, there is an amount of cumulative evidence, direct and indirect, to show that such a thing was impossible. Many of those who made the original charges withdrew them.

This was all well known in Clay's day. There was no reasonable man who believed the story; but at that time those who were prominent in politics were not apt to be reasonable, and certainly the Jacksonian party was reckless with language and careless of facts where its opponents were concerned. The story, however, stuck to Clay all his days and wounded him more than anything else that occurred in all his career, and he spent many years in collecting evidence to prove what no honest man denied and what only implacable foes refused to accept.

An innocent woman may be accused of unchastity so frequently that socially, so far as her reputation is concerned, it is the same as if the tales were true. So with Clay. The story was repeated so often that it had all the political effect of a true story, and did him great injury.

The story of his first campaign for the Presidency properly belongs to the chapter dealing with his Presidential aspirations, but, as it is inseparable from the "corrupt bargain" story, it will be given here. When Clay first announced himself a candidate for the Presidency, he expected Adams, Crawford, and possibly Calhoun to be his chief competitors. He seems to have felt his chances of success problematical, for at no time in letters or speeches, after the campaign was fairly under way, does he express that confidence which he maintained on all other occasions. His notion probably was that the contest would go into the House, and there he would have as good a chance as any one, owing to his long service in that body. Calhoun was on the roll for a short time, but withdrew to take the Vice-Presidency. What put Clay's aspirations to sleep was the rising star of Jackson. Nothing in our history up to this time seemed so astonishing as that the soldier untrained in civil affairs should aspire to the chief magistracy. At first the notion was received with incredulity, then with laughter, and finally with great enthusiasm. The military hero has ever cast a glamour over the human race, and with all our own boasted love of liberty, we have made a President out of every war we have waged. When Clay heard of Jackson's ambitions, he was at first amused, then disgusted, and at last alarmed when he found that Old Hickory could count on some of the States which he had confidently expected for himself.

The Congressional caucus had nominated Craw-

ford, the first great machine politician in national affairs; but as only his partisans, being less than a majority, attended the caucus, this counted for little, and, as a matter of fact, that candidacy which had been so carefully nursed for so many years ended disastrously. Adams was the administration candidate and Clay a free lance. When the fight was fairly on, it was seen that Adams and Jackson had the lead, and the race developed into a fight for third place, since only the three highest candidates could be voted for, under the Constitution, when the House came to decide the matter.

And now the goddess of Fortune, who had so closely attended Clay from his birth, turned fickle. In New York, where Clay ought to have received nearly one-half of the electors (electors being chosen by the Legislature), he received only four. When they came to vote, it was seen that Clay was a defeated man, and Adams got most of the votes. The fight for third place did not interest these gentlemen, who were intent only in saving the Presidency for Adams, if possible. As all the candidates were avowed Republicans and followers of Jefferson, there was plenty of chance for electors to use their preferences without violating party spirit. What finally put Clay out of the running was the action of the Louisiana Legislature. On the day when electors were chosen, a number of his friends were absent, and the electors were divided between Adams and Jackson.

The electoral vote was: Jackson, 99; Adams, 84; Crawford, 41; Clay, 37. It can be seen that if Louisiana had stood firm for Clay, as had been arranged and expected, he would have been third on the list. Clay carried only the States of Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri, and four votes from New York. In those days, the voting extended over a

considerable period of time, so that the result was anticipated long before the last electors were chosen.

Clay does not seem to have been greatly disappointed over this result. While early in the contest he had been able to figure out how he might be victorious, the march of events had been steadily against him. As no one of the candidates had a majority, the election of President was thrown into the House of Representatives, where each State delegation had a single vote. The curious anomaly about this provision of the Constitution is that the choice is made, not by the House chosen in the Presidential year, when it might fairly be supposed to represent popular sentiment, but by the House elected over two years previously, which, historically, has been generally very different in political complexion from the one elected in the Presidential year. There were twenty-four States, and the vote of thirteen delegations was necessary to a choice.

Crawford had recently been stricken with paralysis, and though he lived many years, he was before long permanently retired from active politics. The contest was, therefore, really narrowed down to Adams and Jackson, and it was evident that Clay's influence would have a determining effect on the result. Of course, the members were free to do as they chose, but Clay had been Speaker so long and was so intimate with members that no one doubted his influence would turn the scale. As a matter of fact, it did. Immediately there was coquetting of Clay on both sides. It cannot be said that Adams made any advances of the sort which politicians usually make. He was too stiff for that, and he could not have done so very well had he tried. Indeed, he had serious doubts whether he ought to take the place, as he was not the favorite. Others did so for him, though in a very cautious

way, since Clay was not a man to be approached with a direct offer. The Adams people felt depressed, seeing that Clay had attacked the administration so bitterly in the South American matter, and had accused Monroe and Adams of being willing to accept a minister from the devil, if provided with credentials, rather than from a struggling republic of the South. This, of course, was hyperbole; but Clay was genuine in his efforts for the South Americans, and not wholly, if at all, moved by spite.

In consequence, Jackson and his friends, who had been incensed over Clay's speech accusing Jackson, all at once became very cordial. They were very willing to forgive and forget, if only Clay would be for Jackson. The emissary used on this occasion was James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, who had conducted the Jackson campaign in his own State and was a friend of Clay. He called on the latter, in the presence of a friend, began a discussion of the situation, and suggested that the West ought to have the Presidency; looking directly at Clay, he remarked that if Jackson were chosen he would select a magnificent Cabinet, and could find a Secretary of State without going out of the room wherein they were then seated. This was plain talk and Clay perfectly understood it, but turned it off by saying that the only man in the room fit for the place was Buchanan himself. The interview came to nothing, much to Buchanan's chagrin. In later years Clay was minded to tell this story, but Buchanan always begged him not to do so, as it would ruin him (Buchanan). It is characteristic of the magnanimity of Clay that he kept his peace when he might have called a witness who would have been obliged to confess that he was trying to make a corrupt bargain indeed. Clay, how-

ever, told the story to his biographer, who duly recorded it.

Foiled in getting Clay under their banner by direct means, the Jackson men resorted to a bit of subterfuge which is probably the meanest in our history, as it was one of the most successful, not so much in helping Jackson for the moment as in injuring Clay. When it appeared that Clay was certain to throw his influence for Adams, a desperate effort was made to frighten him out of that position. An anonymous letter appeared in the *Columbian Observer*, of Philadelphia, in which the author, who was said to be a member of Congress, announced the existence of a foul plot, in the fact that Clay had made a bargain with Adams whereby the former was to be Secretary of State under the latter. It was almost equal in infamy to the Burr conspiracy to beat Jefferson, and every art used to have it appear that the story was true, and that the bargain was reeking with "unholy corruption," a favorite expression of the time.

It may well be supposed that Clay was incensed by the publication, which was, by prearrangement, copied far and near. It was the first assault upon his honor, and he resented it with all the impetuosity of a Virginian and Kentuckian combined. Shortly before he had been amused at his remarkable popularity. Every one was telling him how sorry they were that he was not one of the three to be voted on in the House; and though they may have been sincere in this, probably it was also to curry favor with him in making the choice between Adams and Jackson, for he writes rather sardonically, "I am enjoying, while alive, the posthumous honors which are usually awarded to the venerated dead."

It was easy to praise Clay when he was dead as a candidate, but it is possible, if he had made a better

showing in the Electoral College, even if he had been third on the list, he might have been chosen, since few liked Adams, no matter how much they respected him, while the Jackson experiment did not seem a very hopeful one, although he was at the head of the poll.

Clay's immediate reply to the anonymous publication was not only a sharp denial, but an assertion that the letter was a forgery, as he could not believe a member of the House would make any such statement. However, if it were genuine, he denounced the author as "a base and infamous calumniator, a dastard and liar; and if he dare reveal himself and avow his name, I will hold him responsible, as I here admit myself to be, to all the laws which govern and regulate men of honor."

This was sharp language and an implied challenge to a duel. Knowing Clay's impetuous nature, his high sense of honor, and his innocence of the charge, we need not be surprised at the intensity of his feelings thus displayed. It was, however, a mistake to publicly issue a challenge to an unknown man, and Clay later regretted that portion of the letter, especially as it became impossible for him to make good his threat.

Very soon appeared a card announcing that George Kremer, a member from Pennsylvania, was the author of the letter, and that gentleman declared himself prepared to prove his charges. This made the sensation more mysterious than ever. It was considered impossible that the good-natured Pennsylvania Dutchman could have written the original letter or have been in any position to prove the charges, even if they had been true. Probably there was not a man in the whole House less likely to have been the author of such a communication, which seems to have been the exact reason he was

chosen as a stool-pigeon by the Jacksonian interest. It appears that poor Kremer had his vanity flattered until he signed the letter, which was written apparently by John H. Eaton, the bosom friend and companion in arms of Jackson. It seems that Kremer did not even read the letter, certainly not all of it, or else he did not understand the nature of his charges. He later gave testimony to this effect in private, and it would have fared ill with him and others if, most unfortunately, the succeeding events had not seemed to confirm the story.

Clay was now more wroth than ever. He bitterly regretted his implied challenge, because it was absurd to think of challenging the Dutchman who was so manifestly a dupe, while to fight the real men who were behind the plot was impossible. So one result of this imbroglio was that Clay, who had before this fought numerous duels, or had been ready to do so, was now branded as a coward by a certain set of politicians, not one of whom would have thought of going on the field, and who professed to believe that duelling was a damnable practice. Still, they made a more or less effective argument of the fact that Clay was a bluffer, and that it was a guilty conscience which prevented him from taking the poor Dutchman out and slaughtering him. Probably this of itself was not very effective, but there were other things to make Clay's troubles cumulative.

Clay demanded an investigation, and a committee was appointed, every member of which had been opposed to his candidacy. Mr. Kremer arose and announced that if he could not make good his charges he deserved reprobation and castigation and expulsion, or words to that effect. It seems that the stool-pigeon was relying on the brave promises of those who had shoved him forward in

the controversy. When the committee met, its first act was to send for Kremer and ask his testimony. There is something ludicrous, or pitiful, or disgusting, or all three, in what followed. Kremer evidently went to his superiors for the testimony he was to give, and was thrown on his own resources, for they had none to give him. Kremer dared not even go before the committee, but sent a letter which may have been partly his own composition, but seems to have had other and stronger pens behind it. In it he turned in flight, saying he was not accuser of the Speaker, that he could not be held answerable in the House for what occurred out of it, forgetting that he had already avowed responsibility in the House, and that he would make good his charges. He also made the baby plea that the Speaker was a man in great authority and power, while he was a poor member, and that to enter on an unequal contest would be unjust. There is a rather specious plea in this which seems shrewdly intended to catch the eye and ear of the Jacksonians and of those doubters who really wondered whether Clay was guilty or not.

The committee reported to the House the state of the case and the matter dropped there. Still, the Jacksonians insisted that the charges were true, and Clay was in an ugly mood. Their object had been to put him in position so that he could not throw his influence to Adams without seeming to admit the truth of the bargain story, but they had no idea that, even if he did secure the election of Adams, he would go the full length of their concocted plot.

Clay's position with relation to the succession was, and long had been, one of great difficulty and delicacy. He was now in the rôle of President-maker, and it was certain that, no matter what action he took, he would be undevoutly cursed by the

friends of the other two candidates. In spite of his affliction, Crawford did not give up, but sent friends to Clay with propositions that were disgusting in their brutality. Clay was assured that he could be Secretary of State, and that Crawford only wanted a single term, the insinuation being that Clay could have the succession. Jackson's friends continued to haunt him. In truth, Clay did not care for any of the candidates. Crawford he considered an impossibility, and with Jackson he had not been on good terms since the speech on the Florida affair, and he considered that it would be the "greatest calamity that could happen" if Old Hickory should become President. There was left only Adams.

We have seen how Clay quarrelled continually with Adams at Ghent, though it was more a matter of difference in temperament than anything else that made them antagonistic. Clay wanted to be Secretary of State under Monroe, and when Adams got that prize he sulked a bit and then went into opposition. All through the diary of John Quincy Adams, at this period, we can see that the breach was widening between him and Clay. The speech on the South American mission had been a defiance of both Monroe and Adams, and the Speaker had sneered at the Secretary of State on many occasions, concerning which Adams notes that Clay has "neither fairness nor generosity" in his opposition to him. Again, he says, "Clay attacks me without scruple or delicacy." And again, "His [Clay's] morals, public and private, are loose, but he has all the virtues indispensable to a popular man."

After this had gone on for some time a mutual friend brought about something of an accommodation, but Clay was slightly annoyed over the fact that Adams had opposed him in a financial claim against the government. He wanted, as we have

seen, half an outfit, as the term went, for his services in negotiating the commercial treaty in London after leaving Ghent. This is a sum of money granted to a minister, when sent to his post, to cover extraordinary expenses. Adams objected because he had already had one outfit for the whole mission, and thought he ought not to have half another. The Attorney-General decided against Adams, though it was not in his province, and Monroe allowed the claim, the entire facts of which Clay was fully aware.

Adams gradually grew nervous as the time approached for the decision, but he positively refused to make any overtures on his own part, but many of his friends did for him. Benton says that, before Christmas, Clay had told him he would support Adams, and Benton gave this out in an interview while travelling in Virginia. While an intense opponent of Clay, and for a time believing in the corrupt bargain, Benton finally made up his mind that he was wrong and that Clay's action in the matter was without stain.

In the early part of the campaign a subscription dinner was given to Clay by his friends, to which Adams subscribed, but did not attend, as he disliked that kind of thing, while Clay was fond of almost any opportunity to air his views and make friends. Finally, in March, 1824, at the outset of the canvass, Adams did dine at General Jackson's with many notables, Clay being also present. Clay took this occasion to talk politics and a good deal about the tariff, though it was desired to keep the succession out of the affair, as all the candidates were present. That night Adams recorded in his diary,—

"He [Clay] is so ardent, dogmatical, and overbearing that it is extremely difficult to preserve the temper of friendly society with him."

Again we see here two warring temperaments.

Adams himself was waspish and opinionated, and it is interesting to read his strictures on Clay, who was the most lovable of men. The two men flashed at every point of contact. At this dinner Clay, in a spirit of bravado, told Adams that he had been obliged to give him a drubbing in an argument that day before the Supreme Court, but Adams did not relish the humor of the situation.

This friction between Adams and Clay, which had been of ten years' standing, was well known, and the friends of the other candidates counted much upon it. They thought that Clay's personality was such that he would never support a man whom he openly disliked. In this they were mistaken, for Clay was too much of a patriot to be moved by such considerations. He was for Adams because he represented Clay's own views on the tariff and internal improvements. In such a position Clay could not really hesitate in what he called a choice of evils.

He broke his silence on Sunday night, January 9, 1825, when he went to see Adams and told him frankly that he intended to support him, and also that he wished at some time to talk with him about public policies, as the only interest he had in the situation. He had waited so long because he wanted to get a complete view of the situation and perform decently the obsequies on his own dead ambitions. Those who have perused the twelve large volumes of Adams's published diary, and know how he poured out into it his whole soul, never expecting that any other eyes but his would see it; how he made a minute of the things which he did that he ought not to have done, and also wrote down his sins of omission, must be sure that if there had been any talk about the bargain he would in some way have mentioned it. The record is blank in this respect, except afterwards to indignantly deny the accusation.

Clay did support Adams and he was elected. That part of the bargain story was corroborated, though the Jacksonians had believed he would never dare do it; nor, indeed, did they expect or dare to hope that the Secretaryship of State would be offered to Clay or that he would accept it. That was exactly what happened. Adams was made of stern stuff. He loved popular approval, but he was no demagogue, and he scorned those who used their arts. He frankly offered the position of premier to Clay, who took it under advisement and, on the urgent advice of his friends, most unfortunately accepted. The position was certain to bring him no political strength, and he must have known the storm of obloquy that would follow. He did not, however, suppose there would be anything like the virulence that was exhibited, nor that it would mark a turning-point in politics. He affected to believe that the storm would soon blow over, and assured Adams that there would be no trouble about his confirmation, as, in fact, there was none.

No sooner did it leak out that Clay was to have the position than the batteries were brought to bear on Adams. Friends of the latter assured him that it was a mistake and the opposition made threats, but none of these availed anything. Adams had made up his mind, and there was an end on't.

Well had it been for Clay had he never accepted the post. He was put on the defensive for the rest of his career, and that was especially irksome to him. For many years he was kept busy defending himself and calling to witness many friends, even among the opposition, to the effect that he had privately expressed his opinion that he would support Adams long before the corrupt bargain story was concocted. Among the papers he left is a letter he wrote to one of the Gratz family, to which his descendants

were allied later by marriage, asking one of them to write to Frank P. Blair, the elder, whether he did not remember dining with Clay and others on a certain occasion, either in the summer or fall of 1824, when Clay announced that he would vote for Adams. "I cannot but persuade myself," he wrote, "that Blair's sense of justice and the remnant of regard which I hope he still cherishes for me will induce him also to subjoin a statement of the conversation, if he recollects it. Will you speak to him on the subject?"

Blair was at this time one of the most prominent men in Kentucky politics. He was a prosperous planter, had a position in the Supreme Court at Frankfort, Kentucky, and was one of the editors of the *Argus*, a leading Jacksonian paper. Mr. Gratz sent the letter to Blair, who wrote back that he remembered the conversation very well and fully corroborated Mr. Clay's version of the incident, and he would answer on any proper demand, but would not do so voluntarily. It would appear that, for some reason, Clay never asked him to do this, and vindication never came from that quarter; while Blair later removed to Washington and, as editor of the *Globe*, the chief Jacksonian organ, became one of Clay's bitterest political enemies and a leading member of the "Kitchen Cabinet."

History has fully justified the purity of Clay's and Adams's motives, but it has not sustained them in their conduct, either from a political or a practical point of view. It was neither politically right nor expedient for Clay to take the place under the circumstances, as he later found to his cost. Once more the simile of the woman whose virtue is constantly assailed is apposite. Clay never fully recovered from the bargain story, which was enough of itself to defeat him in 1832.

XI

SECRETARY OF STATE

CLAY'S only service in the Cabinet was not important in its accomplishments. He had already refused several portfolios in the Cabinet before he entered that of Adams, and was to refuse more, and during the current administration he was offered a position on the Supreme Bench, which he declined, as Adams had done on a previous occasion. Clay found the Cabinet the most irksome position in his whole career. He was not intended for administrative duty. Routine was against his nature. To be sure, he was methodical in his own habits, always kept his papers safely, and, when writing home to Ashland for some letter he wanted, could give the exact pigeon-hole where it was to be found; but he was at his best when leading a victorious political army, or even when marshalling the opposition; his place was certainly in the field and not in a bureau. He made a good officer, but there was not much that he could accomplish at the time, except the one thing that turned out a complete fiasco and finally brought him once more to the "field of honor." He negotiated treaties with several European powers, secured payment from Great Britain for slaves carried off, and failed to get a treaty by which slaves escaping to Canada were to be surrendered, though for this boon he offered to return deserters from the army and navy of Great Britain. If there are those who think this a concession to the slave power, it should be remembered that it could not have

been done without the consent of the Puritan Adams.

The Panama Congress was dear to the heart of Clay. It fired his imagination, as it did that of Blaine more than sixty years later. It was a vindication of his course when he attacked Monroe. By this time all the South and Central American states, except Brazil, had thrown off the European yoke and Mexico had declared its independence. Bolivar had long wanted a Congress in which all of the American republics should meet and confer upon many topics which seemed essential under the new order of things. The invitation was sent to this country and accepted with avidity. And now Clay was to be a partner in a proceeding which he had so roundly condemned in Monroe at the time of the roving commission which was sent South when Clay wanted a minister. Whether or not he advised with the President we do not know, but it is strange if he did not know of the message which Adams sent to Congress on the subject and advise him against his action. Or, perhaps, he felt that, as he had been worsted in his fight, it was the proper course to pursue. Adams informed Congress that he had accepted the invitation, and asked an appropriation for the commission. At this time the Senate was in opposition to Adams, and that body considered its dignity offended, or pretended that it did, because Adams had not consulted it in advance, and, instead of giving the appropriation, asked what the Congress was going to discuss. The Senators knew well enough, but proposed to make it as uncomfortable for Clay and Adams as was possible. There was a catch in this subject. Among the questions that the invitation mentioned for the programme of the Congress, aside from international law, questions of contraband, piracy, the position of

Cuba and Porto Rico, which still adhered to Spain, was one that applied to Hayti.

Now, if there was one subject that would set the average Southern man wild it was to mention the black republic or, more properly speaking, despotism that had been erected on the island of San Domingo after the most horrible butcheries. Women in the South could scarcely sleep o' nights for thinking of the horrors that occurred, and the idea that Cuba and Porto Rico might become independent black or mulatto republics was unthinkable, because it would mean the possibility of the same thing in this country. When Adams sent the answer, the Haytian question was discreetly omitted, although Clay himself had declared that we must soon recognize her as a nation. We had been doing business with Hayti for years, but never had maintained a diplomatic or consular officer there, and it is quite likely that Clay had the question dropped from the list, as he knew the temper of the South on the subject. It was quite true that in some of the South American republics there were negro generals, statesmen, and diplomatic officers, and the notion of meeting them on a plane of equality was gall and wormwood. Benton detected the omission, and made one of his fiery speeches on the subject. Indeed, the ultra slave-holding Senators had little interest in the Panama Congress.

After a display of political fireworks had been set off and much valuable time consumed, the money was finally appropriated and the Commission sailed, only to find that the whole scheme was a fiasco. Only a few delegates turned up and these adjourned, and the whole subject was postponed for several generations. It was during these debates that the charges of John Randolph were made and the duel took place as narrated elsewhere in this book.

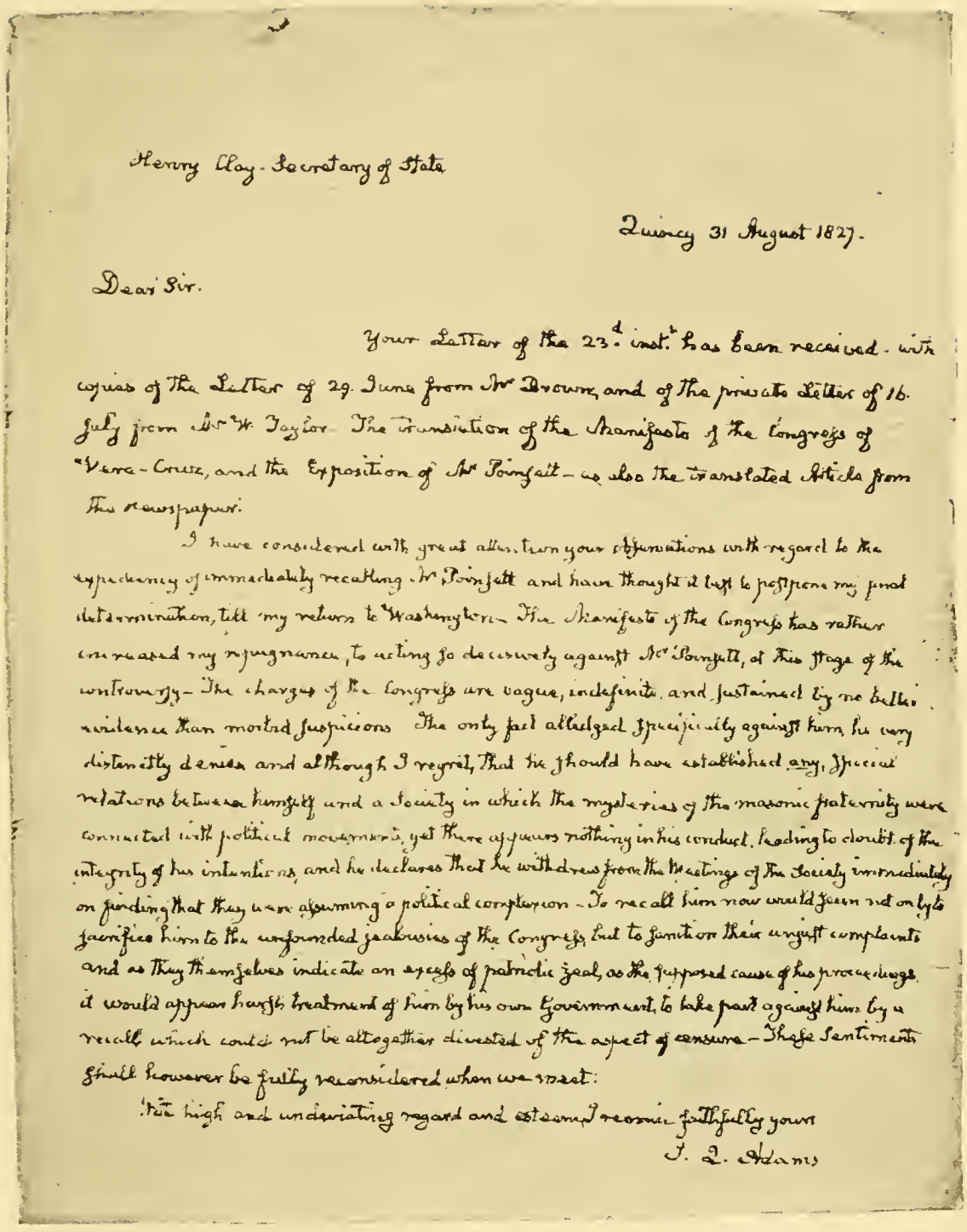
It was evident that Jackson was not satisfied with his first defeat, and was to make another effort. As Clay had not yet succeeded in getting the sort of vindication he craved, he seized upon a statement of Jackson, denounced him publicly, and demanded that he give his authority. The story credited to Jackson was that he had said at a dinner, when many persons were present, that he could have been elected President if he had promised Clay to remove Adams from the Cabinet, intimating that Clay wanted to have the Secretaryship of State. That he told the story Jackson could not deny, and, in reply, gave Buchanan as his authority. Buchanan utterly denied that he had ever told Jackson anything of the sort, or had ever thought of such a thing, seeing that it had never happened. As a matter of fact, Jackson was laboring under a misapprehension, or had forgotten that Buchanan was one of his own warmest supporters, and that he had made the overtures to Clay already mentioned. Clay now informed Buchanan that he proposed to tell the story of that affair, but he was persuaded not to do so, and refrained with a magnanimity that was characteristic of the man. In fact, while Clay was a bitter fighter, he was the most magnanimous of men; though, as he sometimes rather bitterly remarked, it all seemed to be on his side, for none of his enemies ever showed him the slightest consideration.

Armed with letters galore from friends and political enemies, Clay now made a long speech at Lexington, in which he vindicated his course once more and called upon Jackson to withdraw his charges, which that doughty old warrior promptly refused to do. He knew now that his charges could not be substantiated, but he simply pointed to the fact that Clay had elected Adams and the latter had made him Secretary of State.

This was probably the bitterest hour of Clay's life. He could stand defeat in the open field. He did not mind going down in the halls of legislation, so long as he could keep his colors flying ; but the assaults upon his honor deeply grieved him and undermined his health, so that for a time it was feared he was about to go into a decline. President Adams called God to witness that there had never been any bargain, and it is supposed that many persons of the opposition must have believed the testimony, though it failed utterly to convince the Jacksonian masses, who were only too anxious—such is human nature—to see a popular man besmirched.

Clay did his best for Adams in 1828, but there never was much doubt as to the result. Jackson swept the country, and Clay was so disgusted that he would not even act as a stop-gap, and resigned on the last day of Adams's administration. He was now disgusted with politics and made dire prophecies of what would happen to the country under Jackson, whom he hated all the more because that old soldier had sent a man to take charge of the State Department the moment the signal-gun announced that Jackson had taken the oath. In Clay's opinion, the country was done for. We were to have a military despotism, and all the woes that befell Rome in her decadence were to be ours. It is impossible not to note in his utterances at the time a feeling of disappointment that was tinged with personal griefs. It is very hard for us to think we can be dispensed with in this world, and Clay thought that a nation which preferred Jackson to himself and Adams could not reasonably be expected to have a happy future.

Clay had now definitely resolved to retire from politics. He refused election to the House and to the Legislature ; was sick of the bickerings and injus-



Henry Clay. Secretary of State

Quincy 31 August 1827.

Dear Sir.

Your Letter of the 23d. inst. has been received. with copies of the Letter of 29. June from Mr Brown, and of the private Letter of 16. July from Mr W. Taylor. The translation of the Manifesto of the Congress of Vera-Cruz, and the Exposition of Mr Poinsett — as also the translated Article from the newspaper.

I have considered with great attention your observations with regard to the expediency of immediately recalling Mr Poinsett and have thought it best to postpone my final determination, till my return to Washington. The Manifesto of the Congress has rather encreased my repugnance, to acting so decisively against Mr Poinsett, at this stage of the controversy. The charges of the Congress are vague, indefinite, and sustained by no better evidence than morbid suspicions. The only fact alledged specifically against him he very distinctly denies and although I regret, that he should have established any, special relations between himself and a Society in which the mysteries of the masonic fraternity were connected with political movements, yet there appears nothing in his conduct, leading to doubt of the integrity of his intentions, and he declares that he withdrew from the Meetings of the Society immediately on finding that they were assuming a political complexion. To recall him now would seem not only to sacrifice him to the unfounded jealousies of the Congress, but to sanction their unjust complaints and as they themselves indicate an excess of patriotic zeal, as the supposed cause of his proceedings, it would appear harsh treatment of him by his own Government, to take part against him by a recall which could not be altogether divested of the aspect of censure. These Sentiments shall however be fully reconsidered when we meet.

With high and undeviating regard and esteem I remain faithfully yours

J. Q. Adams

LETTER OF PRESIDENT JOHN QUINCY ADAMS TO HENRY CLAY WHEN THE LATTER WAS SECRETARY OF STATE

(Original in possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky. Photographed especially for this volume.)

tice, and glad to be at his beloved Ashland, where he rushed into farming with his accustomed ardor. He had thought, while in Washington, of being a candidate in 1832, but now told his wife that he would no longer bother with public affairs, and, though he should practise some, he proposed to devote himself largely to his estate. He increased his stock in every way, and was happy, not only to be at rest, but to receive the plaudits of his friends, and especially of his neighbors. He made trips to Ohio and Tennessee on business matters, and was received with the highest acclaim. This intoxication was too much for him, and, when letters began to come from friends of high standing in the East, saying that the country needed him, the demon of ambition entered his soul once more. When legislatures, or conventions, or mass-meetings had begun to nominate him for the succession to Jackson, he could not resist the siren song, and before long he was not only a candidate, but was even willing to go back to the Senate, a risk which no candidate should take, and one which proved fatal to him at this time. It seems likely that if Clay had stayed at Ashland, feeding his pigs and raising mules, he might have been elected in spite of the corrupt bargain story; but there was a vacancy in the Senate, and he was so willing to have the honor that he went to Frankfort and was chosen by a rather close vote. So, leaving the shades of Ashland, he once more set out to Washington, where he was to battle against the Apollyon of the White House.

Among the Clay papers preserved by the family is an interesting one from Adams to Clay dealing with the Poinsett matter. Poinsett was minister to Mexico, and had much trouble, owing to the fact that there were so many persons claiming to be President. It was a time of revolution, and Poinsett

got unwittingly into trouble by recognizing the government which seemed to him to be entitled to consideration. Other aspirants sent complaints to this country, but the matter was finally adjusted, though Clay at first thought Poinsett should be recalled, as the accompanying letter indicates.

It should be noticed that by this time the personal relations between Clay and Adams were the warmest, and continued so until the death of the latter. When the men came to know each other better, they found they had been mistaken in earlier criticisms. The letter from Quincy is interesting both by reason of the chirography and as showing the cautiousness of Adams.

XII

CLAY ON SLAVERY

CLAY'S views on slavery have been misconstrued or misunderstood very much, according to the critic's predilections on the subject. The radicals of the South considered him almost an abolitionist, while the radical abolitionists of the North called him a trimmer, a wobbler, and a timeserver, who professed to abhor slavery, and yet served its every interest in the hope of political preferment. Clay's political views and actions as to slavery will be discussed in another chapter, but it is proper here to investigate just what he thought of the domestic system. There is no question that he abhorred it. He said so frequently, and showed his faith by manumitting his own slaves at his death.

Curiously enough, the first piece of property he owned after he came into the world was a slave bequeathed to him by his maternal grandfather. Whatever became of this legacy is not known, though it is probable, in view of other events, that he was carried off with the others whom Tarleton's troopers stole on the day of Henry's father's funeral. Mrs. John Clay brought her husband a number of slaves, and the Reverend John is said to have disposed of over thirty by will, though most of them are believed to have been carried away or escaped, so that there were not many for Mrs. Clay when the will was probated. In fact, the family estate had been scattered by the war. Mrs. Clay's father was a Tory, but she and Mr. Clay were ardent patriots. Their homestead in Hanover County proved an easy

prey to Tarleton's troopers, and during the war it is said to have been ravaged many times, so that, when Henry's father died, the widow had considerable difficulty in getting along, in spite of her nominally large estate. The country was greatly impoverished, and it is now known that Clay, in speaking of his early poverty, was telling the truth, though his position was not different from that of many other boys whose parents, a few years before, had been esteemed prosperous.

When Clay's mother married Watkins, who was ten years her junior, and moved to Kentucky, it is said to have been the advice of the step-father that Henry be left in Virginia to study law. What he had seen on his own estate and what he learned at Richmond must have made a profound impression upon him, for he no sooner reached Lexington than he plunged into the election which was held in 1798 to decide whether the Constitution should be revised, the question of gradual emancipation being the paramount issue. It is remarkable to find Clay not only on the stump, but writing articles for the newspapers in favor of gradual emancipation, although his chief patron was John Breckinridge, who entirely opposed the scheme. The emancipationists won their cause, and, but for the excitement over the Alien and Sedition laws, resulting in the famous Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798, there is no doubt that gradual emancipation would have been adopted. Breckinridge and his party, though greatly in the minority, took advantage of the excitement of the hour to turn the attention of people to other channels, and probably to play on the prejudices of the hour, so that the subject was abandoned, much to Clay's regret then and afterwards. In his famous "market-house" speech in Lexington in 1847, Clay said,—

"My opinions on the subject of slavery are well known. They have the merit, if it be one, of consistency, uniformity, and long duration. I have ever regarded slavery as a great evil, a wrong—for the present, I fear, an irremediable wrong—to its unfortunate victims. I should rejoice if not a slave breathed the air or was within the limits of our country."

After detailing his efforts in 1798 in favor of gradual emancipation, which proved so abortive, he expresses the fear that there is little chance of soon remedying the evil, and thinks it may take a century and a half; and his sole consolation is that the negro is at least better off than if in the wilds of Africa. Admitting an evil and correcting it are, he thinks, two different propositions, and he was at this time utterly hopeless of any near solution of the difficulty. Then he proceeded, as usual, to roundly abuse the abolitionists, whom he ever detested.

This expression of his views has been variously commented on. The abolitionists, who were at that time girding their loins for another battle, saw in the statement a surrender of all that Clay had said against slavery throughout his life. They thought it a poor division when one who professed to abhor slavery gave the negro bondman sympathy, but gave his master the bondman. Birney had broken with Clay, politically, many years before this because Clay would not once more go into a scheme for gradual emancipation which had received the endorsement of some of the most prominent slaveholders of Fayette (Clay's own) County. Birney charged that Clay feared it would hurt his political prospects in the South to be allied with such a movement, just as he claimed that his speech in 1847 was double-faced, part for the North and part for the South.

This sort of criticism from a Northern man might easily be dismissed as being from a prejudiced or

ignorant source. Birney, however, was a Kentuckian born, who had inherited a lot of slaves, and not only set them free, but had sent them North and provided for them. Birney was a man to whom a conviction meant a sure policy of action, and he was disgusted with Clay for holding identically the same views, but unwilling to carry them out. He openly charged that in 1830 Clay alone defeated the movement for gradual emancipation which had been endorsed by so many prominent men in both parties, all slave-holders.

Clay, however, was no professional philanthropist. He was a Virginian by descent, and his temperament was not such as to seek a solution of this problem to the exclusion of all others. If his political ambition at times stood in the way of practical philanthropy, he was no more than human. He believed the subject was so vast that it must be settled gradually, and on a true basis. We have seen that the violent and sudden breaking of the bonds of four million slaves brought other problems which are not yet settled.

But though, in politics, Clay temporized with the Southern view of slavery, in his actual contact with the negro race he was all that a Christian gentleman could be. One of the sorrows of his life was the discovery that the husband of a favorite daughter was little better than a slave-dealer ; that he owned barracoons of negroes in the far South, and dealt in them largely. This was agonizing to his soul, as he abhorred the traffic, as did nearly every gentleman in the South, even those who bought and sold slaves. Clay bought many slaves, but never sold one. Among them he was a patriarch, and as much admired as by the whites. It was a social distinction to belong to Marse Clay.

On his way from Ashland to Lexington, not long

after he had purchased the estate, he overtook a lot of negroes, and among them a small boy who was crying lustily. On asking what was the trouble, the pickaninny said that they were all slaves of a recently dead master, and were going to be sold, and he was afraid that he and his mother would be separated. Clay's feelings were touched, and he immediately bought both mother and child, who lived on his estate the rest of their days or until emancipated. This boy grew up and became known as Old Harve, and was the most faithful of servants. The oldest of the servants was Old Aaron, who was the coachman (afterwards set free), and he quite lorded it over all the rest of the negroes because of his years and long contact with the Senator. Before he died he expressed a wish to have a big funeral, which the Senator proceeded to gratify. He purchased a lot in the principal cemetery of the town and engaged his own pastor to conduct the services.

The pall-bearers were the oldest servants on the place, and, as was the custom, each wore a long piece of crape flowing from his hat. The funeral pageant was a great success and much edified the negro population. On the way home from the funeral, Old Harve stopped in town to get a new pair of shoes, and unwittingly left his crape in the store, and did not discover it until reaching home, when he apologized to his mistress, saying, "I never poll-parroted before, nohow."

He was always willing to let his slaves earn their freedom, and his valet, who had served him long and faithfully, was almost driven into freedom after refusing it for years. By will, all the slaves on his estate were freed on reaching a certain age, and were assured not only of an elementary education, but provision was made for their future so that they might not drift into idleness or want. This greatly

reduced the value of his estate but there was never a murmur of complaint from any of the heirs. Many of the servants remained on the plantation until death or the war disturbed conditions and the estate was sold.

The writer of this, just after the Civil War, when a youth, was a frequent visitor at the old Phœnix Hotel, the centre of the social and political life of Lexington in the old days. There was at the time an aged negro barber who was the autocrat of the place because he declared that he had been there for nearly eighty years. His chief delight was to tell stories of the great men whom he had served, and in particular Henry Clay. The old man had a very vivid imagination, and some of his tales were, perhaps, apocryphal, but others were undoubtedly true. One of them which impressed the writer so that he can yet remember the old man's exact words and intonation, ran as follows :

"Yassir, Marse Clay doan 'low no nigger to shave 'im but me. Sometime he come in an' I shavin' 'nother gen'leman; but soon's any one see Marse Clay, he jump up and say, 'Tek my cheer,' and he just as proud as peacock to wait with the lather all overn 'is face while I shaves Marse Clay. Yassir, he talk about that for months, and Marse Clay, he always thank 'im so grand like it mek 'im proud.

"Marse Clay, he call me Henry, but that ain' my name, but he call me Henry 'caze that he own name, jest for devilment. He come in he always mek joke. 'Henry,' he say, 'you ain' no barber. You ought to be butcher an' shave de hawgs.' I say to 'im, 'Dat jes' w'at I goin' to do now, Marse Clay.' An' he look turrible at me and say, 'You damn black nigger, I cut yo' ears out an' sell you down de ribber ef you scratch me.' Den he laugh, an' I laugh, an' I don' scratch 'im 'ceptin' only de one time,

"One time Marse Clay he very ole man, an' he come in de Phœnix, an' young man have to help him 'caze he no longer biggety lak he uster be, and he cough turrible. He set down for shave, an' I feelin' mighty po'ly dat day. He ax me if I doan' think he gittin' ole, and I say, 'No,

Marse Clay, you jes' lookin' like er two-year-ole.' He say, 'Henry, you bad liar. I go an' sell you down de ribber, 'caze you bad liar.' I ain' sayin' nothin', 'caze I feelin' mighty bad, an' I shave 'im, but my han' trimble an' fust thing I know I scratch 'im. Yassir, I scratch 'im. I ain' never done that afore, but I feelin' bad, and cyan't hol' de razor straight. Marse Clay he look at me mighty cu'ous outen them catamount eyes o' his'n, but he ain' say nothin'. I feel so bad 'at I scratch 'im agane, and den seems ter me he gwine rise up an' kill me; but he ain' sayin' nothin' 'twel I scratch 'im once mo', and den he rise up in de cheer, and say in that soft voice o' his'n, 'Henry, what ail you all dis ebenin'? You ain' nebber cut me 'fore.' Den I tells 'im. My boy Joel, 'at was body-serv'nt to one o' young Marse Henry Clay's ossifers enduin' o' the Mexan War, he in trubble. One o' Marse Preston's bad niggers an' Joel gits in a mixup, an' he goin' kill my Joel; but Joel, he cut 'im with a knife, an' Marse Preston put Joel in de jail and say he goin' sell 'im down to New Yorleens an' I ain' goin' see him no mo'. My boy Joel, he good boy, but no nigger musn' trifle wid 'im, nor sass 'im, nor tell 'im he ole father nuthin' but babboon. I tell'n Marse Clay dis, and he gettin' madder all de time, 'caze Joel he hep cyarry young Marse Clay offen de fiel' at Beyuna Visty when he get kill in de war, and he and yuther nigger fetch 'im offen de fiel' when de Mexans tryin' kill eberbody, an' my Joel he get hit, too, only not bad. Since then Marse Clay he always like Joel, and always asken me abouten 'im. Den w'en I tell about Joel, Marse Clay he rise right up in de cheer and say, 'Gimme my cane!' he say, 'Gimme my cane!' an' he voice sound like de roarin' ob de lion. I say, 'Hole on, Marse Clay, I ain' more'n half shave you yit,' an' he yell out once mo', 'Gimme my cane!' an' de young man w'at's wid 'im, brung 'im de cane, and he go out de do', an' I tink, 'Lawdamassey, what on de yearth a-comin' now.' Bimeby back come Marse Clay and Marse Preston, and Marse Clay he say, 'You tell 'im,' he say, 'you tell 'im you ain' goin' sell Joel. Dat boy carried my boy off de battle-fiel' when he daid,' and den Marse Clay, de tears come in he eyes, and Marse Preston say he ain' goin' sell my Joel, only he musn't cut no mo' niggers. Den Marse Clay he sit down an' I finish shavin' 'im, an' I ain' cut 'im no mo', and w'en Marse Clay go he gimme a dollar, an' I ain' nebber shave 'im no mo' 'caze he soon goin' Washington an' die.''

About the only practical effort that Clay made in the way of emancipation was in connection with the American Colonization Society, of which he was one of the founders and for some years president. This was a chimerical scheme both as regards the number of freedmen that were deported and as to their success in Liberia. It served as a salve for the consciences of many Southern slave-holders, who contributed to its funds and thus thought they were doing all that human ingenuity could devise to get rid of an odious, though profitable institution. There is no doubt that Clay could have wielded an immense influence in favor of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, but whether it could have been brought about, even under his leadership, is an open question. There are those who think he should have tried, and the fact that he did not do so cost him the Presidency, since, when Birney ran as the Liberty party candidate in 1844 against his old friend Clay, he managed to draw off from the Whigs enough votes in New York to elect Polk, who was committed to the Mexican War. This was a strange notion for a party whose sole desire at the immediate moment was to prevent the annexation of Texas. But the truth was that Birney and the abolitionists had become discouraged by Clay's attitude on the subject. He had declared himself against the annexation of Texas, and later had said he favored it under certain circumstances. This matter will be discussed later, and is mentioned here because it naturally falls under the subject of his view on slavery and antislavery's view of him. It is fair to say that Birney always denied that he was the cause of Clay's defeat, and succeeded in making Horace Greeley retract the charge, but the logic of figures and known facts is with the statement as given.

Perhaps, if slavery in Kentucky had manifested

the horrors which were more or less present in the cotton belt, Clay's actions would have been different. In Kentucky it was a patriarchal institution. It is true that there were cases of brutality, and no defence is offered for the institution, even in its most benevolent aspects ; but it is certain that, as a rule, the slave in Kentucky had an easy time of it. He had plenty to eat and wear and was seldom disturbed in his family relations or those to his master. He did not work very hard, save in the summer season, and the lash was almost entirely unknown, except in the case of the fractious. Nowhere in the country was slavery so mild, and, living in that atmosphere, it is natural that Henry Clay, who was not much given to introspection and not much of an ethical philosopher, should take a different view of the subject from those abolitionists who lived at the North and knew little about the institution, or those few at the far South where they saw the worst.

Clay was hedged about by inheritance, traditions, and environment. It could hardly be expected that his view would be the same as that of William Lloyd Garrison, though neither of them was wholly in the right nor wholly in the wrong.

Clay continually worked to keep slavery out of politics. He deplored the tactics of the abolitionists, and it is not just to ascribe his opinion of them and their propaganda solely to a desire to curry political favor with the slave States. It would be hard to find a man who did more unpopular things or took more unpopular stands, to his own hurt, than Clay. He was no coward, and though it is common to call him a trimmer, it cannot fairly be said that he wavered so much for personal success as because he believed success was best for the whole country. It ought to be remembered that, while he hated

slavery, he never believed in universal emancipation, except accompanied by emigration. He did not believe the two races could live in political peace together. He drew a picture of what would happen, asserting that if the negroes were free and permitted to vote, there would be strife between the races, murder, rapine, and civil war. In the last part of the picture Clay has not been wholly justified as yet, though we have passed through many fiery trials, and, for the most part, exactly along the lines which Clay predicted. The only thing that can be fairly said against his position, according to his own stand-point, is that his efforts in the American Colonization Society were so feeble that it was like ladling out the Atlantic with a tin cup. One with such sincere convictions might have found a more effective way than this.

But although Clay wished to keep slavery out of politics, it proved impossible, and in the end it was the antislavery people who rejected him for a worse man, according to their own standards. Nothing is so persistent and so masterful in politics as a moral idea. No party is safe unless it professes and adheres to a moral idea, and it was the weakness of the Whig party that it had none.

Although Clay emancipated his slaves at his death, he refused to do so while alive, and for this he was often reproved. To one Mendenhall, a Quaker, who urged this course upon him, he replied that he had some fifty slaves, worth about fifteen thousand dollars ; that some of them were old and decrepit and utterly unable to make a living ; some were infants, and their mothers were not likely to be of the provident and careful sort. The dictates of humanity prevented him from turning these off.

" Then there is another class who would not accept their freedom, if I would give it them. I have for many years

owned a slave that I wished would leave me, but he will not. What my treatment of my slaves is you may learn from Charles, who accompanies me on this journey, and who has travelled with me over the greater part of the United States and in both the Canadas, and has had a thousand opportunities, if he had chosen to embrace them, to leave me. Excuse me for saying that my slaves are as well fed and clad, look as sleek and hearty, and are quite as civil and respectful in their demeanor and as little disposed to wound the feelings of any one as you are. I shall take your petition [to emancipate his slaves] into deliberate consideration; but before I come to a final decision, I should like to know what you and your associates are willing to do for the slaves in my possession, if I should think proper to liberate them. Are you willing to raise and secure the payment of fifteen thousand dollars for their benefit, if I should be induced to free them? The security of the payment of that sum would materially lessen the obstacle in the way of their emancipation."

This sort of argument is laughed at by those who never came into contact with slavery. It is not pretended that it was conclusive on the broad question of slavery, but for individual practical cases it was a strong one, and as against immediate abolitionists the *argumentum ad hominem* was pretty complete. Having used very much the same argument on another occasion, the reply of the abolitionist was that money considerations must not stand in the way of good morals. It so happened that the man in question was a rather prosperous one from New York. Mr. Clay replied that he had never meant to put it on those grounds, but that if his questioner believed as sincerely in the teachings of the Bible as he professed, he ought to follow the advice of Jesus and go and sell all his goods and give them to the poor. This closed the incident.

In the last of the eighteenth and the first of the nineteenth centuries the newspapers of Kentucky teemed with advertisements of negroes, cosmetics, books, and jackasses. A perusal of the files of those

years would lead one to suppose that, outside of politics, those commodities were about all that concerned the neighborhood. The advertisements are not only of slaves to sell, but give specifications of those desired, and there is in most of them an evidence of good treatment; also, in some, of candor. One advertisement of a very likely negro boy, who had about all the merits on the catalogue, concludes, "His only drawback is an insatiable desire for strong liquor."

In a country where whiskey was native the slaves were frequent in their libations, if they got the chance. A temperance lecture was held in Lexington, in which the clergy urged that no slave be allowed over three drinks of rum in any one day, except on holidays and during harvest. Verily the situation of the Kentucky plantation slave was far from being unhappy, as Mrs. Stowe set forth in her book, which she was almost afraid to publish because she thought her Northern friends would consider her an apologist for slavery!

THE OLD RACE-TRACK AT ASHLAND WHERE HENRY CLAY TRAINED HIS FAMOUS THOROUGHBREDS

(From a photograph taken for this volume.)

XIII

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

It is the universal testimony of his contemporaries that Clay was the most emotional man they ever met. This is the key to his character. It explains his successes and his failures. It was this feminine quality which distinguished him from the able men with whom he served. It amounted, at times, almost to hypnotic power, and very often it extended to "absent treatment." No man in his life was ever loved as Henry Clay. Men worked for him with enthusiasm and wept over his defeat. Women hung on his words and kissed him. There has been no such psychological phenomenon in all our history.

In person he was attractive. Six feet one inch tall, spare in youth, and well proportioned in later life. He had, in addition to a pleasing appearance, the quality of self-reliance in the extreme. No man ever saw him embarrassed in society, at the bar, in Congress, or in diplomacy. This extended to a fault, since no man has within himself all knowledge or all wisdom. His hair, in youth, was white, eyes blue, forehead high, nose very large and blunt. The most conspicuous feature was his mouth, which was very large but not displeasing. His lips were so formed that, in his own words, he "never could learn to spit," and so was no tobacco-chewer. He was a distinguished-looking man, but in repose his face was far from handsome.

His voice was a wonderful organ. It ranged from deep bass to high falsetto, and he early learned to have it under complete control, and modulated it to the

need of each occasion. Its sympathetic quality stood him in good stead. Had he studied vocal music, he would have been an unusually fine singer.

He was no profound scholar, had no knowledge of metaphysics, or the refinements of logic, and cared little for books. He affected to despise such things, and this was a great weakness. He seldom cared to learn, except from experience, which he did not always take to heart. His self-dependence was not always justified, but often enough to exaggerate his own idea of his infallibility. He asked little advice, and always made his political programmes unaided. Elsewhere it has been noted that he was not learned in the law; but where success in difficult cases came, unexpectedly to others, it was due to his rare resourcefulness, and his keen perceptions, and an adroit way of turning things to his own advantage.

His first instincts were usually correct, and he was bold in stating his position. Having thus declared himself, he seemed to think that he had paid sufficient tribute to absolute truth, as he understood it, and was justified in becoming latitudinarian. Thus, when charged with inconsistency on any great political subject, he would point to some original statement he had made, often quite at variance with the popular understanding of his existing position, and triumphantly discomfit his accusers. He could do the same for parties representing diametrically opposed positions. Clay alone could not see that he was inconsistent. On only rare occasions would he admit he had changed his position,—as in the case of the bank. In all this Clay was honest with himself. It was a psychological infirmity, due in part to his defective education and in part to his temperament. Not once in his whole career was he guilty of knowingly abandoning a policy or a friend from ignoble motives. It was impossible. But his impul-

sive nature led him to say bitter things and to change his position without being aware of it. Had he boldly avowed himself an opportunist, he would have been better understood and more respected. As it was, he wounded his friends more than his enemies, though without the slightest intention.

Except in the height of angry colloquy, he was courteous and generous. He was a fine sample of the courtly Virginian, and *noblesse oblige* was with him an article of faith and practice. At the bar he was courteous; in debate he never took unfair advantage, and only when roused by passion, with a too generous admixture of whiskey, did his better nature lose control. Sometimes he was neatly met on his own ground. Once, in the Senate, after he had made a particularly severe attack on Jackson, telling Van Buren, who was then Vice-President, to go to the President and represent the ruined state of the country, and more to this effect, the latter calmly descended from the chair and, walking solemnly to Clay, asked him for a pinch of snuff. It was courteously given, but it ruined the whole effect of his philippic.

In his home he was a delightful host, and his entertaining would have ruined a less resourceful man. Only one instance is recorded of an unfortunate affair with a guest. Captain Marryat, the British novelist, was visiting him, when Clay commented on the foreign custom of tipping servants. Marryat denied that the custom existed ; whereupon Clay told of his experience in London while negotiating the commercial treaty. It seems that on the occasion of a visit to an official's house, he had failed to tip the servants, and a delegate from the latter called on him to collect the money. Clay was outraged, and at first refused. The servant explained that it was customary, and showed the list of tips

given by his colleagues, which, as a rule, were large. Clay gave the man the smallest sum on the list and promptly lodged a complaint, which, of course, amounted to nothing.

After relating this incident, Clay raised his glass and proposed the captain's health; but the latter was enraged, being trapped, and replied, brusquely,—

"No, I have had enough."

Clay looked at him a moment; then, turning to the youngest person at the board, a mere lad, said,

"I drink to you. You haven't drunk too much."

Lafayette, Harriet Martineau, and many other distinguished foreigners were his guests, and his hospitality was lavish.

In spite of his angry passages with many persons, he never cherished resentments. With most of his foes he made peace before he died. Crittenden alone appears to have been kept out of the inner circle almost to the last; yet Clay was so far from resentment that he urged on Fillmore his appointment to a cabinet position, and it was made.

In his last years there was a vacancy in the Lexington post-office, a good position in those days. The late incumbent was a Whig, but his assistant was a Democrat and an aspirant for the vacant position. He was popular and in every way worthy, but his chances seemed nil. Clay promptly had him appointed by a Whig administration.

When Barry, of Lexington, a fierce political opponent, was Postmaster-General, there was a post-office scandal of great magnitude, and the Whigs were jubilant. It seemed a chance for Clay to get back at his old opponent, who had so bitterly maligned him in the "corrupt bargain" affair. On the contrary, Clay arose in the Senate and said that, whatever might be the result of the investigation, he was certain that no stain of dishonor could adhere to

his old friend and political foe the Postmaster-General.

It was with Benton that he broke most lances. For thirty years the sturdy Missourian sat in the Senate. He was as different from Clay as possible. Could either have combined the good qualities of both, there would have been such a statesman as the country has never seen. Benton was as immovable as Clay was volatile. Both had been reared in the same school of experience and each had his weak points. Politically they fought it out on the floor of the Senate with hammer blows, but almost always maintained friendly personal relations, due in part to the fact that Mrs. Clay was cousin to Benton, and in part to the mutual admiration of the two men for each other's good qualities. Ambition seized Benton but once, and that was in the military line, and proved a fiasco. Clay had pretty nearly every sort of public ambition but this.

The weakness of Clay's character lay in his easy seduction by the siren of ambition. Time and again he renounced public life and determined to enjoy himself at Ashland ; but never for long. Kentucky was ever anxious to honor him, and Whigs the country over were constantly invoking his aid. His perfervid imagination always came to him at such times as a thief in the night. It demonstrated how he could become President with such apparently mathematical accuracy that he could not resist. His wife wanted him to stay home, but never interfered in his ambitious plans, though she does not seem to have shared his optimism.

His love of children was a master-passion. Nine of his children grew up, at least to middle youth, but he survived most of them. The death of four daughters within a comparatively short time wrung his sensitive nature almost to the breaking-point.

When Colonel Clay fell at Buena Vista, it seemed as if the god of day had gone down ; thereafter he was a broken old man. His family relations were beautiful all his life long. For over fifty years he was a loving husband and father, and those of his descendants who remember him cherish his memory with almost idolatrous affection. It is a striking commentary on his own character and the temper of the times that thrice he placed the happiness and support of his family in jeopardy, and on other occasions seemed to invite mortal combat.

The affection of friends is instanced by the fact that in the fall of 1844 a bridal couple visited Ashland on their wedding-tour just as Clay's defeat was learned. On the journey down the Mississippi the bridegroom became ill and grew worse and worse, so that a physician was called in. Finding no functional trouble, he asked the bride if her husband had sustained any recent severe mental shock. She told of his grief over Clay's defeat, whereupon the physician threw his arms around his patient, wept with him, and departed. There was no cure for such a wound as this.

One must not gather from any relation of Clay's weaknesses that he was not a strong man. He was a very great man. His failings were generally such as led men to be lenient. His virtues roused men almost to the point of adoration, but a certain congenital moral and intellectual strabismus at times alienated from him those on whom his success depended.

It is necessary to consider some of his habits in detail, because of the extraordinary charges that were made concerning him during his lifetime, and which are still believed by many persons. According to the custom of his time, he drank rather freely, but seldom to excess. No one ever saw him visibly

under the influence of liquor, or, at least, to a degree that made a painful impression. In his youth he was esteemed a moderate man in all things, and in later years he raised wine on his own estate, of which he was very fond. It was only occasionally that he indulged in whiskey, if we can believe contemporaneous accounts. In the committee-rooms of the Senate liquor was to be found, and it was the almost universal custom for members to fortify themselves repeatedly. On some occasions Clay is said by eye-witnesses to have taken enough to add to the fury of his indignation, but never to show any signs of intoxication.

In youth he played for high stakes, but was not a gambler in the modern sense of the word. He only played with friends, and abhorred the public gaming-table, which he never attended. In his day the favorite game of chance was "Boston," and Clay was so fond of this that he would spend most of the night at play. In Washington, during his earlier career, he is said to have lost eight thousand dollars in a single night, and this so crippled him that, though later he won most of it back, he gave up high stakes for a long time. Another favorite game was brag,—the earliest form of poker,—in which bluffing was a far greater element than now, since there was no draw. This Clay loved to play in the summer time, at the various Springs where he journeyed, and there are plenty living who remember seeing him and other prominent men thus engaged, with mint-juleps on the side-board for refreshment.

On one occasion a friend said to Mrs. Clay, "Isn't it a pity your husband gambles so much?"

To which the lady replied, "Oh, I don't know. Mr. Clay usually wins." This story is denied.

All testimony is to the effect that, as a rule, he did win. In his seventieth year he joined the Episcopal

Church, after which his demeanor was more quiet, as, in any event, his advancing years would have compelled. Two grandchildren were christened at the time. Clay always was a religious man in sentiment, had the highest reverence for Christianity, and was a rather constant attendant at church. Although, after the manner of the times, he would swear roundly on occasion, there was less of profanity in his remarks than of adherence to a custom which prevailed among gentlemen of the highest standing, even in the church. He was a close friend of the clergy, in spite of faults, which were more condoned in his day than in ours. One of the remarkable scenes in 1844 was when the Rev. William Gunn and his twelve stalwart sons marched to the polls at Lexington and voted in a body for their friend and neighbor. And one of the most pathetic was when those same thirteen men burst into tears when they found their leader had been defeated.

There is another subject that must be spoken of because it has already been given so much publicity,—his personal morals. It has been freely stated that he was the father of many illegitimate children and that he kept a negro mistress. Horace Greeley, in his *Tribune Almanac* for 1843, published a life of Clay by Henry J. Raymond, in which the subject was freely discussed and the charges laid to political malice. This writer has been at great pains to discover any evidence of the charges made, and has found none which is reliable, outside of a single ambiguous statement of John Quincy Adams. On the other hand, the testimony of men yet living and those dead is to the contrary. It is true the latter is negative evidence, but it is of more value than the irresponsible charges.

This much is true, that Clay was the most uxorious of men, and it is difficult to understand how the

affection that was so wonderful between himself and wife could have continued had he been guilty of derelictions.

It is the common notion that he was careless about money matters and that he was most of the time in debt. On the contrary, he was most scrupulous. In the memorandum taken down on his death-bed he had every financial arrangement figured out, even to the fact that on a certain day his body-servant would be entitled to two dollars. An old man tells how, upon one occasion, Clay was in Lexington, and, wanting a newspaper, found himself without change and borrowed ten cents from him. Next day Clay drove all the way in the rain to town to return the money. That he occasionally borrowed large sums of money is true, but so did every prominent man of his time and nearly every one now, and he paid all of his notes, with the single exception hereafter referred to.

In spite of his geniality and the wonderful power he had over men, Clay was always dignified in public,—at times almost to austerity. He paced the streets of Lexington alone, as a rule. No man came up to him and slapped him on the back and said, "Hello, Harry!" He had friends by legions, but they took no liberties with him. He had a peculiar walk, like an Indian, in which his feet were always kept pointed straight ahead instead of inclined to the outside, as in the case of most persons. This gave his stride a dignity and peculiarity that was notable, and wherever he walked people turned instinctively to look at him. He had a well-shaped foot and hand and he always wore shoes, which was remarkable, seeing that boots were almost universally worn at that time. He said they hurt his ankles. He was exceedingly neat in person and fastidious as to dress. He liked popularity and had

not a little vanity, as was natural. Success joined to his natural temperament made him imperious, and he brooked no opposition. This was a fault which very often injured him in politics. He wanted to lead his party without any advice, and often he committed it without consultation in very important matters. This was not the sort of temperament nor the kind of leadership that brought success in a country where every man is an emperor. Clay was a democrat in convictions, but really an aristocrat in practice.

One certain way to get him aroused was to accuse him of cowardice. In the plenitude of his career, Tom Marshall was his most distinguished competitor for forensic honors. Marshall had a brilliancy which has become traditional, though few evidences of it remain, and it seems to have drawn much of its inspiration from the bottle. One summer Clay came home resolved to get rest and make no speeches, whereupon Marshall, on the stump, made some contemptuous remarks, indicating that Clay did not speak because he was afraid to open his mouth on current questions. This came to Clay's ears, and he at once issued a notice that on such and such a day he would address the people of the district, and that Marshall would have a chance to reply. Clay was in fine fettle on that occasion and wrought up to indignation by Marshall's insinuations. His wrath was terrible, and the anathemas hurled against Marshall and his party were terrible. When Clay had finished and some of Marshall's friends desired him to reply, the latter said,—

"By God! the old man has on his war-paint today and I dare not meet him."

Remembering how he came to Lexington almost friendless, he had a great way of aiding young men, both with advice, recommendations, and money.

In this way he had a devoted band of youngsters who could be depended on at any moment to come to his assistance in politics. At the famous dinners at the Phoenix Hotel, in Lexington, where he was apt to sound the key-note of his campaigns, he was always sure to have a good sprinkling of these present, as he felt it essential for any political party to encourage those who were likely to grow up into leadership.

Being always accessible, with his genial side presented, keeping strictly in the background the many worries incidental to his position, it was known to but few what a really indefatigable student he was on occasion, especially where the tariff was concerned. The latter half of many a night he passed poring over and assimilating facts and figures with which, on the following day, he would bring confusion into the ranks of his opponents. And oftentimes he would open the most tremendous debate with his body no better nourished than by a single cup of coffee.

The politeness of Mr. Clay was so genuine as to meet the requirements of its true definition, benevolence in small things. A little girl who was on a journey with her father, and chancing to dine with him at Ashland, was called by Mr. Clay to sit beside him. She appreciated the honor, but was hardly prepared for it, and felt rather abashed ; but "Prince Hal," while entertaining his other guests with that brilliant playfulness for which he was so remarkable, would drop an occasional word into her ear and attend personally to her plate. Under these ministrations she was beginning to feel bland and self-possessed, until helped to an artichoke,—something she detested, and which she could not make up her mind to eat, although politeness seemed to require the sacrifice. In her excited state, the artichoke

seemed to increase in bulk, and would, without doubt, attract all eyes to her everlasting discredit. But, presto! the great man who had brought the trouble upon her had removed it. "So you don't like artichokes," he said. "Why, I adore them," and straightway the conical, over-scaled vegetable was appropriated to his own use.

When the coffee was brought in, he asked Mrs. Clay if it was some of the Liberia coffee, mentioning, with evident satisfaction, that a present of several sacks had been sent to him by the colonists.

On one very inclement day, when going to Lexington, he overtook an elderly man, a professional horse-trainer, and not a very elevated specimen of his class, whose gray hairs streaming in the wind appealed irresistibly. He stopped his carriage, calling out, "You are too old to be afoot such a day as this, Mr. ——; get in with me."

In one of the Eastern cities it happened, as Clay was walking along, a large crowd gathered quickly to shake hands, that it entered suddenly into the diabolical head of a printer's boy, after he had dipped his hand in the ink-pot, to rush out and offer his paw. It was not refused. "Ah, young gentleman," said the genial statesman, with his captivating smile, "I'll pass the joke." And pass it he did. Readiness and genuine good-humor never fail to arouse enthusiasm in the hearts of the American sovereigns, and, with loud cheerings, there was an eager rush to obtain from Mr. Clay's hand some trace of the ebon fluid.

He rarely forgot a name or a face, and occasionally he was put to the test. Meeting a lady whom he previously had met once, after a rather long interval, he accosted her cordially. The lady, being the wife of a distinctly pronounced Democrat, and willing to "try him," said,—

"I do not believe you know who I am, Mr. Clay."

"Certainly I do," was his immediate answer. "You are Mrs. Daniel ——."

Inimitable was his manner towards ladies, in its admirable commingling of graceful deference and friendly cordiality. While making a royal progress—for it resembled nothing else—in a large city, he was asked to designate some hours for receiving ladies only, so that, the crowd being of their own sex, they would escape being jostled by the coarser masculine element coming to pay respects to the head of the Whig Party. Two young girls were among the early arrivals, and one of them being the daughter of an old friend, he said, affectionately kissing her, "I am glad to see you, my dear; I knew your mother." But he did not know the mother of her exceedingly winsome companion, and not wishing to make invidious distinctions, he put the question, "Haven't you a kiss for an old man?" She had.

Kissing, they say, is catching, and the ball, once set in movement, pursued its unchecked course, going merry as a marriage-bell till the coming of a lady whose appearance plainly indicated that she had long passed the epoch of youth and beauty; but Mr. Clay, gallantly keeping to his line, offered her the current coin.

"You cannot kiss me," Mr. Clay, she said, coyly drawing back. So far as was apparent to the eye, the check only increased his ardor, and he implored the privilege, but the lady remained obdurate.

It was one of Clay's peculiar characteristics that he never could, by any effort of memory, make quotations correctly, and when he attempted to embroider his orations with borrowed gems of rhetoric, treacherously they slipped from his grasp, even if he had known them a short time before.

Much wonder has been expressed that Clay, with

such seeming slight equipment, became such a distinguished lawyer. The truth is that in his day "lawyers were largely born," and they developed according as their abilities and circumstances permitted. There was not a law school in the country, and the student depended on books and his preceptor, with what training he could get in the courts, sometimes assisting his proctor in preparation of cases. To some it seems as if there must have been a very distinguished bar a century ago, and such was the case, but the great number of poor lawyers is forgotten. Even as late as 1845, Henry Clay, Jr., who had all the advantages of his father's aid and fame, who had graduated from West Point, studied law, and was an exceptionally gifted young man, found it so difficult to make a living at the bar in Louisville that he was on the point of removing to New Orleans when the Mexican War broke out and he went into the service.

It must, however, have been an unusual opportunity that Clay had in Richmond. Chancellor Wythe was one of the great lawyers of his day, the preceptor of Marshall, Jefferson, and many others with whom Clay, as a young man, came in contact. Clay's mind was exceedingly alert. His was a remarkable gift of perception, and needed less study than many others. He also had the more important quality of seeing the fundamental principles which underlay a case, which he used as occasion required. He was not above turning any technicality to his own advantage, as some of the instances adduced indicate; but he was more than a pettifogger, more than a shrewd barrister. He was a profound lawyer.

Ordinarily in trying cases he was the soul of courtesy, and, when having a bad case, seldom used the privilege of abusing the opposing attorney. On one occasion he was retained in a very important

case which an associate handled for two days in his absence, and had apparently lost. It involved some exceedingly technical questions, but when Clay arrived on the scene he threw away, practically, all his associate had done, presented his case on entirely different and, as a matter of fact, novel grounds, and won his case. He was always dignified, and in later years, when his position had become assured, there was some little air of superiority in the way he would deal with judges on law points. Before a jury he has had few equals, if we may believe the testimony of contemporaries, as well as the fact that he was so uniformly successful.

In the Supreme Court he was always listened to with great respect by the court; and though naturally the percentage of success was not so large there as in inferior courts, he was considered a dangerous antagonist by Webster, Sergeant, and Binney.

XIV

THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Clay *vs.* Jackson or Jackson *vs.* Clay was the situation in American politics for more than twenty years. At the outset all the advantage seemed to be with Clay, but he was invariably defeated, either in the field, in Congress, or in convention, except on a few points which brought him little satisfaction. It would be easy to take a mere cursory view of Clay's career from 1824 onward and call it a failure. As a matter of fact, it was in these years that he achieved his real success, though he lost the rewards which he craved.

When Clay arrived in Washington for the December session in 1831, it was well known that he would be nominated without opposition for the Presidency, to oppose Jackson. It is likely he would never have left retirement had he not supposed his chances really good for success. While in Kentucky the sirens had sung very loud to him, but when he got to Washington he was undeceived, if, indeed, he had ever believed he would win. The convention met and nominated Clay in a way that was intended to rouse enthusiasm. The roof shook as the delegates cheered every mention of his name ; and though the title of National Republican was still adhered to, this may be said to have been the birth of the Whig Party,—a name that had no meaning in this country, and which was in some respects a drawback. John Sergeant, of Pennsylvania, was named for second place, and the convention adjourned amid much enthusiasm. In this Clay, apparently, did not share, for a few days

later he writes to a friend that he wishes he could partake of the optimism of the convention, but fears the hold of Jackson on affairs is too strong to be easily shaken. Still, the chances were much more even than the final electoral vote showed. Thurlow Weed, one of the most astute and adroit political managers the country has produced, thought that Clay threw away a positive chance of election by writing the so-called Indiana letter, in which he alienated from himself the support of the anti-Masons. This party was the first, but not the last, in this country founded on a single idea, but its strength lay in the fact that it had a great moral basis, at least as supposed. The charge was made that one Morgan, who had abjured Freemasonry, was murdered by sending him over Niagara Falls because he had threatened to write a book exposing the secrets of the order. The story may have had some original basis, in which case it could have affected only those actually concerned in the perpetration of the deed ; but, although strenuosly denied, the report grew, and public indignation became aroused to an extent that is almost incredible. The Masons were accused of all sorts of crimes, and every secret order was placed under the ban. Curiously enough, the matter got into politics, and was adopted with great enthusiasm by those who felt the need of a moral issue, and especially by young men who wanted a chance in politics, and felt that they had been kept out too long. The movement spread like wildfire all through New England and the Middle Atlantic States. It upset all calculations, turning out many old State officers and defeating members of Congress, and for a time it seemed likely to sweep the country. It was, however, much too violent to last, and built on too slim a foundation. Now, most of the young men who were

engaged in the anti-Masonic campaign were ardent worshippers of Clay, and they desired to have him take a position where they could endorse him for the nomination. Weed was extremely anxious, and thought for a time that such an accommodation could be brought about. Clay saw the situation very clearly, and here was a chance where he might have been diplomatic without sacrificing principle, and have made much political gain. He was, however, made of sterner stuff than the frail platform of the anti-Masons. He wrote the so-called Indiana letter, in which he said frankly that he had in youth joined a Masonic lodge, and, though he had long since ceased attendance on its meetings, he felt that there was nothing in the situation to make the order an issue in politics; that he preferred that every man should have his own personal views in religious, social, and benevolent matters, and that he could not lend his aid to the anti-Masons. This was manly and courageous. It was the kind of stand Clay always took when there was a clear issue of morals or ethics in politics. He was bold as any lion, and those who call him a trimmer for his own advancement misunderstand his position.

After this the anti-Masons had nothing to do but nominate a separate candidate, whom they found in former Attorney-General Wirt. As it turned out, the anti-Masons polled only about three per cent. of the total vote, and carried but one State. Weed thought, however, that if Clay had been the candidate, he might have drawn many more away from the Democratic Party, as the Jacksonians were now for the first time called. This is problematical. It was the custom of the day to interrogate candidates, and Clay was prompt and frank in his response, and he certainly never regretted any harm it did him, supposing it did any at all.

This was before the days of popular campaigns, when the race for the Presidency was conducted largely before Legislatures or in Congress, and when swinging around the circle was unknown. Clay knew very well that his only chance of success lay in being personally connected with certain definite and important measures which should commend themselves to the public. It was twenty-five years since he had first entered the Senate, and he now looked upon himself as an old man, though he had twenty years more of active service ahead of him. When Webster wrote him that he was needed in the Senate, he told the truth, because Jackson was having things pretty much his own way in legislation. Benton was leading the forces of the administration, and though, as a rule, he could not muster a majority, he worked to keep down such legislation as Jackson opposed with very general success. Clay had been absent during the famous oratorical duel between Hayne and Webster, but his sympathies were all with the latter. There never was an instant in Clay's career when he contemplated secession or a breaking up of the Union without horror, never a time when he did not believe it would be the greatest of calamities, never a time when he did not use his utmost powers to bring about an accommodation and preserve the Union on any terms. It may well be claimed that he was in error as to his methods, but his point of view on the general subject was without stain.

Clay's programme was brief, and consisted of these principal items :

Recharter of the National Bank.

A new and more highly protective tariff bill.

Distribution of the land surplus.

Discussion of these various measures belongs to other chapters, and they will be considered in detail.

For the present it is only necessary to say that Clay conceived a very broad platform, and believed he had so manœuvred that Jackson must either adopt it, in which case Clay would get the glory and the votes, or else Jackson would lose immeasurably in public esteem by opposing it. There was much to support this idea. The only objection lay in the fact that, as a political scheme, it was artificial. If an administration is blamed for everything that happens when it is in power, from bad weather to financial panics, an equally fickle public is likely to give it credit for the good that is done, whether the administration is responsible or not.

These three measures were started through, and eventually all but the last got to the President, with results to be narrated later. In the mean time there was another affair on hand that called for attention, and it was one of the few things in Clay's public life in which he appears the narrow politician instead of the statesman, the petty self-seeker instead of the magnanimous foe. And, as usual when there is a great deal of trouble, a woman was at the bottom of it.

When Jackson became President he scandalized society by appointing, as his Secretary of War, John H. Eaton, the same who is supposed to have written the Kremer letter. The trouble arose, not over Eaton's capacity, but because of his wife. Mrs. Eaton had been in earlier years Peggy O'Neill, and was the daughter of a tavern-keeper, at whose house many members of Congress resided. Her saucy beauty was a by-word of the town, and there were rumors concerning her virtue which were so well circulated that they might as well have been true, so far as her place in society was concerned. She had married Timberlake, a purser in the navy, who had committed suicide, and it was alleged that it was because

of his wife's indiscretions. When, shortly afterwards, she married Eaton, people wagged their heads and said "Aha!" and winked, and talked, and made things as uncomfortable for Peggy as was possible. Social Washington was much more select and stilted then than now, and when Jackson had convinced himself that Eaton and his wife were paragons, he had no hesitation in making the appointment. Great was his indignation to find that Mrs. Eaton was not received by any of the ladies of the Cabinet, at which he stamped his cane and swore by the Eternal that he would settle the matter post-haste. Much to his surprise and consternation, the wife of his nephew, who was mistress of the White House, refused to have anything to do with Peggy, and she was packed off to Tennessee in a hurry. Then Jackson gave a ball, to which the men came but no women, except the sycophants. He demanded of his Cabinet that they make their wives call on Mrs. Eaton. Probably some of them tried it, with the usual result. Do as he could, there was absolutely nothing that would establish Mrs. Eaton in society, and for two years the question of her virtue was about the only interesting one before the country. It resulted in a complete break-up of the Cabinet. Van Buren was Secretary of State, and he, as a widower, had done his best to please his chief and make Mrs. Eaton a social success. Grateful for such efforts, Jackson rewarded him with the British mission, and Van Buren sailed, during a recess of Congress, for his post.

It became part of the programme of the opposition to Jackson to refuse confirmation of Van Buren, —a trick that was not only petty, but had its reward in injuring those who concocted it. By this time Calhoun had broken definitely with Jackson and was hatching those schemes of nullification which

were later to develop into secession. It served his purpose to join with Webster and Clay in opposition to Jackson. All these men were ambitious, but to get rid of Jackson was the prime necessity, after which they were content to fight the matter out alone. The accusations against Van Buren were petty and soon evaporated. Benton took up the cudgels and, in his blunt way, convinced all who had no political cobwebs before their eyes that there was nothing in the charges against Van Buren. All was in vain, and, when confirmation was refused, Benton well remarked that they had broken a minister and made a Vice-President. This proved to be the case. Van Buren, at Jackson's demand, was put on the ticket, and finally succeeded to the Presidency, something that probably would not have occurred had he been allowed to remain in Great Britain as minister. A distinguished British statesman remarked to Van Buren, on hearing of the unusual slight put upon him, that he ought not to mind it, as it was frequently a great advantage to a public man to be the subject of an outrage. It proved so in his case.

When Clay had secured from Congress a recharter of the bank and a new tariff bill which reduced duties as a whole, but was more strongly protective of those goods where there was American competition, he thought he had Jackson in a hole. He rather expected that he would sign the recharter and veto the tariff. This would be to Clay's interest, as every one knew that Jackson had been opposed to the bank, which was friendly to Clay, and that Clay was the champion of the tariff was undisputed. Jackson did exactly the opposite, and in this he showed more political acumen than Clay gave him credit for. Indeed, it never seemed possible for the Whigs to understand that they were

opposing a man of extraordinary intellectuality, and one whose lack of experience in politics was more than made up by his boldness, his shrewdness, and his use of the means at hand to accomplish his purposes. Jackson may have started the debauchery of politics in the degradation of the civil service, but he was no man's fool. He vetoed the bank measure, taking to himself great credit for having opposed a giant monopoly that was partly a foreign institution and was gnawing at the vitals of the republic, while he signed the tariff bill, and thereby made himself solid with the voters all over the country, who believed there was much virtue in protection. The game he played for was Pennsylvania, and he won it, though previously it appeared as if Clay would sweep the State. The Whigs made a great deal of noise, but they never had enough votes in Pennsylvania and in many other States.

Clay was discomfited at the result, and discovered too late his mistake. By this time the popular vote prevailed in choosing electors in all but a few States. Clay's showing was relatively worse than eight years previously. He carried only the States of Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, with forty-nine votes, while Jackson had two hundred and nineteen, with eighteen scattering and two vacancies. On the popular vote he was much nearer Jackson, his vote being about eighty per cent. of the latter's. The defeat, however, was overwhelming.

In 1836 Clay was not a candidate, and in 1840 he was cheated out of the nomination. In 1844 he was once more made the standard-bearer in the most exciting campaign the country had ever known, and he lost by a hair. In many respects the campaign exactly forty years later resembled it both in the personality of the candidates and in the

fact that personalities were indulged in to a greater extent than ever before, and that New York decided the result by a close vote.

Clay was an old man, but still vigorous. He had been in retirement for a short time at Ashland, preparing for the campaign that was coming. He was the logical candidate of the party. During the Tyler apostasy, Clay had stood up and borne the brunt of things. He had made the party programme and had, as far as possible, carried it out. All there was of Whigism was personified in Clay, who naturally became the standard-bearer. The outlook was hopeful, in spite of Tyler's efforts to wreck the party. He had suffered the fate of most apostates, had found himself without a party, and resentment against him was a good asset of the Whigs. The country was in fairly prosperous condition, the only great question that loomed up being that of the annexation of Texas. We have seen how Clay was among those disgusted with the conduct of Monroe in giving up Texas in the first place. He even wished to prevent the ratification of the treaty with Spain, so as to get Texas restored, though he failed.

Clay, however, was not one of those who joined in the senseless cry of "reannexation" of Texas. By our own act we had refused the soil, and had neither legal nor moral claim to it. Texas had, however, achieved a quasi-independence on her own account, through the efforts of a lot of American adventurers, and was now clamoring for admission to the United States. This was the great question in American politics. On former occasions Texas had been refused, pending a more settled state of affairs, and now it was plainly stated by Mexico that any effort on our part to annex Texas would be considered tantamount to a declaration of war. This did not

alarm either Tyler or Calhoun, his Secretary of State. They did not expect war, for they hoped to buy up the Mexican government; but in no case were they afraid of such a contingency. The administration took the extraordinary step of securing Texas annexation by treaty with Texas alone. This immediately gave rise to bitter opposition, and no one was more opposed to the treaty than Clay. He pointed out that this was not the proper way to secure territory, as the House of Representatives ought to be consulted in such an important proceeding. Also, he was opposed to the treaty because it absolutely ignored all claims of Mexico. Whatever the Texans may have thought of their position, Mexico had never conceded independence, and was still fighting fitfully to maintain her sovereignty. This was common sense aside from the question of slavery, which loomed up large in the background, and which was in reality the crux of the whole matter. In the course of our national development the Northern or free States had come to outnumber the slave, and it was evident that the disproportion must grow larger. Practically all of the Southern territory was carved up into slave States, and, with the Missouri Compromise line in force, there was no chance for extension of slavery, except across our borders, and Texas was the chief hope of that school of statesmen, headed by Calhoun, who insisted that the republic would fall unless there were exactly the same number of free and slave States. Texas was large enough for five States, and these would restore the equilibrium. Calhoun was bending all his energies in favor of the treaty, but it soon became apparent that it was not sustained by the sentiment of the North, while the South was by no means unanimous for it. Clay and Benton were slave-holders, but opposed to any such rape of Mexico without

a general agreement of all interests concerned. Other Southern statesmen took the same view. They did not care to have slavery injected into politics, and were certainly opposed to making the extension of slave soil the *sine qua non* of a continuance of the Union.

Texas was a question on which every candidate must speak his mind. Clay pondered long over the subject, and then issued his so-called "Raleigh Letter," in which he explained his views thoroughly. It was a well-tempered document, in which Texas annexation was discussed, from beginning to end, in Clay's very best style of thought and expression, and Clay's best was unexcelled. It was a statesman-like document, in which it was explained that we had not the slightest claim to the country; that Americans had been engaged in the Texas revolution, and there was much foreign distrust of our conduct in the matter; and, finally, that the whole issue at stake was one of strengthening one section of the country. This would undoubtedly give rise to a similar feeling in the North when an effort would be made to secure Canada, and in the end we should get into very serious trouble. Clay had wanted Texas when it was possible to get it honorably, had even tried, as Secretary of State, to purchase the territory from Mexico, but without avail. Now he was opposed to securing it, unless by the consent of Mexico, since any other course meant war.

When Clay sat down to consider a subject on its merits and without regard to any other considerations, he had almost the gift of prophecy and was generally unerring. Had he kept his mouth shut and his pen still after this, had some kind friend locked him up in his ice-house or sent him to the woods, he would have been President without any

doubt. But now Clay's constitutional weakness manifested itself once more. He began to apologize and explain because he found his letter was not well received in the South. It would be difficult to completely analyze the motives which led Clay into his singular course. No doubt he wanted to win most ardently; but Clay was courageous enough to be defeated at any time for the sake of a principle, and it is not likely that desire of personal victory alone made him hedge. Doubtless he was grieved to find that so many of his Southern Whig friends differed from him. Doubtless he was somewhat alarmed when he found that the Calhoun tribe was in arms against him once more, threatening disunion. Doubtless he found his own views actually changing under pressure. Such motives or others led Clay finally to abandon an impregnable position. So far as the Southern Whigs were concerned, they were so far committed to Clay's position on the Texas question that it really did not matter that the Raleigh letter angered the Calhoun legions. The latter were not to be appeased in any event, and it was madness for Clay to attempt to do so. The letter was well received in the North, where the rising tide of opposition to slavery threatened ill for the Democracy. Clay was against national dishonor, against slavery extension, unless by general consent. That was his moral position, and it was received with enthusiasm. If Clay had not ever been more willing to appease his enemies than to placate his friends, he would have let the heathen rage, and fought it out squarely on that line, no matter what the result.

No; Clay must equivocate, and began a series of letters intended for Southern consumption, in which he wished it understood that he was not opposed to the annexation of Texas *per se*, but only to the way in which it was brought about. Now, this

really had been his position all along, and he had so stated it, rather mildly, in the Raleigh letter. It seemed to him no harm to enlarge upon this point for the benefit of his Southern friends, and so there appeared the Alabama letter. Clay was not wholly to blame for this. He had been urged to write his views because the situation had changed somewhat by the refusal of the Senate to ratify the treaty with Texas. Instead of pointing to his Raleigh letter, he proceeded, in two letters to Stephen F. Miller, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to explain himself more fully, in which he made two distinct errors. He denied that he was courting the abolitionists, and claimed to have been more abused by them than any man in America. His language, however, was such that wounded the abolitionists unnecessarily, and they never forgave him. His second error was to say in this letter, "Far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I should be glad to see it, without dishonor, without war, with the common consent of the Union, and upon just and fair terms." While this was true of most of those who opposed the treaty, it was the most inexpedient statement a candidate could make. In the first place, it put him in the position of a trimmer, which was bad enough; but advantage was taken of the language he used to utterly distort his meaning. The Democratic press and speakers seized upon the expression and cut it off so that it read, "Far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I should be glad to see it." This was outrageously unjust, and deceived only those who were not familiar with the technique of the situation, but it was effective. The Democrats proudly claimed that really there was no use harping on the Texas question any more, as Polk and Clay were in absolute accord on the

subject. This maddened the Whig leaders, but it convinced a large section of the masses at a time when campaign lies were not so easily run down as at present.

The two Alabama letters soon produced such a commotion that Clay perceived his mistake, and once more tried to get himself back to the Raleigh letter standard, but all in vain. A man can change his mind in politics only once in a campaign. The more Clay wrote the worse the situation became. The abolitionists, both of the Birney and Garrison wings, were disgusted. Garrison never had any use for Clay, but Garrison was too radical for most of the abolitionists, and, while they liked to have him agitate, they would not allow him to lead. Once more Birney was put up to carry the standard of the Liberty party. Birney was one of Clay's oldest friends, knew his real convictions on slavery, and despised him because he felt he was not living up to them. Birney was of Scotch descent, and his convictions were unalterable. He had long hoped that Clay would be an effective instrument in bringing about emancipation. Now that such hopes were dead, and he was opposing Clay, there was no reason for any false delicacy in the canvass. Birney told his followers that Clay was not to be trusted, and they believed him, though in so doing they elected Polk. There are certain men, and especially at certain times, to whom this sort of reasoning is convincing, but it taxes credulity and makes any logical reasoning impossible. Here was Clay fighting against the annexation of Texas, except on grounds that were satisfactory to all concerned, while Polk was known to be eager to get Texas on any terms whatever. The Liberty party preferred the devil to the deep sea and, consciously or not, made Polk's election certain. It was in this campaign that Clay

had the talk on slavery with the Quaker Mendenhall, as is elsewhere narrated.

The campaign turned out to be one of unparalleled virulence. That of 1840 had been enthusiastic, but, on the whole, respectable. Old Tippecanoe was personally unassailable, but the campaign was one long debauch of enthusiasm. In 1844 personalities entered into the campaign in a way that shocked the public and certainly did harm to Clay. It was claimed on the stump, through the press, by pamphlets and broadsides, that Clay was a monster of iniquity. Some of these pamphlets are still preserved and are curiosities. Clay was said to be a profane swearer, a gambler, and a violator of the Sabbath. None of the more serious charges that have been more or less covertly circulated appeared in these pamphlets nor in any of the printed speeches, and, if there had been any foundation for them, there is no reason to suppose they would have been withheld, as the documents were brutally frank. Thus, it is solemnly stated that on February 6, 1838, while Clay stood at the rail in the back of the House of Representatives, of which Polk was Speaker, some ruling was made which displeased Clay, whereupon, in a loud voice, he called to the Speaker, "Go home, G—d d—n you, where you belong."

Such a charge in these days would have no effect, since people are too well trained to the wiles of politics to believe one-tenth of the stories that are told. Any one who knew Clay must have known that the story was a baseless fabrication. Clay did swear, but that he should have used such language in the House is as likely as that he should have walked up and shot the Speaker. It is unthinkable ; but it is sad to relate that, in the rural districts, especially of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, the story was believed. Polk was a Pres-

byterian and a strict church member, and at this time Clay had not been baptized. It was also related that at a public vendue of his son's goods in Kentucky, when there was money to be raised for some creditors, Clay became excited because prices were not up to his expectations and yelled out, "I don't care a G—d d—n whether the creditors get a d—d cent or not," and more to the same effect,—a statement that was as silly as it was untrue.

Then came stories of his gambling. All sorts of affidavits were produced to show that Clay was a gambler. Clay never denied that he played for stakes, but that he was a gambler or ever frequented a gaming-table was untrue. This his enemies well knew, but they used affidavits from all sorts of persons to show that Clay played for money, even for very high stakes, and that a gaming-table would be set up in the White House was their contention, in case Clay was elected. As a matter of fact, Clay never allowed a card at Ashland, and he was very strict about deportment at his home. That he travelled on Sunday was considered a terrible violation of the Scriptural command.

Then some one was sent down to Ashland to nose around and see whether or not the slaves were well treated. This errand proved well-nigh fruitless; but the spy managed to get hold of some anonymous negroes, with whom he talked, and though his allegations were indefinite, the attempt was to have the public believe that Clay did not treat his slaves with that kindness he had claimed in his talk with Mendenhall; that they were badly fed and not well treated. How much effect such charges had it is impossible to say, but the result of all these charges, letters, and experiences was that the Liberty party made great accessions of strength, and almost entirely from the Whigs,—enough to ruin Clay. Clay's

refusal to endorse the Native American movement also cost him many votes in New York and Pennsylvania.

On the other hand, there was a tremendous enthusiasm for the ticket by the regular party organization. Every effort was put forth to advance the success of the cause. Mass-meetings were held all over the country, and an effort made to work the same sort of racket as was so successful in 1840, when Old Tippecanoe carried the nation by storm. It was not entirely successful, as there was now a moral issue in the campaign on which people pondered, and votes were not made by mere enthusiasm. There were Clay almanacs and Clay songsters issued. The newspapers of that day were feeble instruments compared with the present, and made little effort to report the campaign, so that resort was largely had to handbills and broadsides and pamphlets. One of the most successful issues was "The Clay Minstrel," which contained a lot of political doggerel for use at mass-meetings. More feeble efforts in the line of lyric poetry it would be hard to find, and it would seem as if the Whig spirit of commercialism must have smothered the fires of genius. "The Minstrel," however, was very popular, and is to-day an interesting document. A few verses are quoted to give an idea of the inspiration of the hour :

"Henry Clay, when a boy without friends or a home,
Left a poor orphan lad on the cold earth to roam ;
But the fire of his genius flashed early to view,
And he filled all with wonder the older he grew."

Here is another :

"John C. Calhoun, my jo, John,
I'm sorry for your fate ;
You've nullified the laws,
You've nullified your State.

You've nullified your party, John,
And principles, you know,
And now you've nullified yourself,
John C. Calhoun, my jo."

Another begins,—

"For Harry Clay and liberty
Let all the people shout."

One more must suffice :

"Come all ye bold lads of old '40
That rallied round Tippecanoe,
And give us your hearts and your voices
For Harry, the noble and true."

It is evident that such doggerel was not likely to inspire a great deal of enthusiasm in and of itself, but it became very popular, and by midsummer it appeared from a cursory view that practically every one was going to vote for Clay. In this campaign the "Mill Boy of the Slashes" slogan was raised, and it was attempted to show that Clay was one who had risen from obscurity and poverty to the high position he held by his own unaided efforts, which the reader of this book will see was not strictly correct.

If there was one State upon which Clay considered he could count with absolute confidence, it was Pennsylvania. True, it had voted against him in 1832, but now the situation was different. Having tasted the bitterness of a sliding-scale tariff, it was becoming prosperous under the tariff of 1842, which was strongly protective. This was the Clay tariff, and no one else could claim credit for it, certainly not the Democratic party which had opposed it. Unfortunately for Clay, he never had good party managers, and Pennsylvania was taken from him by

a trick which cost that State dear. Dallas was on the Democratic ticket, and, as a Pennsylvanian, it was made to appear that he was as good a tariff man as Clay. The Democrats raised the slogan, "Polk, Dallas, and the Tariff of 1842." This was stealing thunder with a vengeance, but it was worked so adroitly that it prevailed, and the State which, in its heart, loved and admired Henry Clay as much as any, went for the opposition, deluded into thinking that it was electing its own son and preserving its industries. There were few tears shed for the woes of that State when, a little later, Dallas gave the casting vote in favor of the low-tariff measure of 1847.

Returns came in slowly in those days, and when New York was found to be very close, there was a fever of excitement for many days. At last it appeared that the tide was against the Whigs. The conscientious abolitionists had deserted Clay for Birney, and elected Polk. The curious psychological phenomenon was exhibited of a country that wanted to elect Clay up to the last minute, then defeating him and immediately afterwards going into spasms of hysterics over the result. It was common to say of Clay: "Had any man such friends?" Indeed, no other man ever had, especially such faithless ones; for if there is any thing which a study of the period makes certain, it is that the people wanted Clay, especially on the two occasions when he was not nominated and could have been elected, and on this occasion, when victory seemed assured. For weeks people would not believe that Clay had been defeated, and when it was found to be all too true, there were many excuses offered, some of which were more or less convincing, but the principal one was that he did not get votes enough.

It is interesting to know that this was the first campaign where it was alleged that there was sys-

tematic cheating at the polls in many States. Of course, there was more or less of this, and it is hardly fair to suppose that it was all on one side, but there was some consolation for the defeated party in examining the returns from a number of States where it was claimed there were more votes cast than the census-rolls or poll-lists could possibly allow. These charges were made in many States, but they were never investigated officially, and the result was not changed. After all was said on the subject, the indubitable fact remained that Clay had defeated himself by his letters and vacillating position on the annexation of Texas. Betting on the result was also greater in this campaign than on any previous occasion.

The country had given its voice against Clay, and if there is anything in such elections, its voice was for war with Mexico, which Tyler proceeded to bring on by his despicable trick.

In the voting, Clay made a much better showing than at any time previously. The electoral vote stood: Polk, 170; Clay, 105. The popular vote was much closer, Clay coming within 38,000 of Polk, while Birney had over 62,000. Polk was a minority President on the popular vote, and his majority in New York over Clay was only 5,000, while Birney had 15,000, almost wholly drawn from Whig sources. Clay carried eleven States and Polk fifteen. Of the slave States, Clay carried only Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee,—not one of the cotton States that he had made a bid for,—showing that the Calhoun programme of Texas annexation or trouble was gaining ground. In the North, Clay carried Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Vermont. In many of the States the vote was close, but the vote of New York, that would have saved him, went to Polk, and even

this he would have gained if Silas Wright had not left the Senate against his wish and made the race for Governor, after refusing the nomination for Vice-President owing to his anger that his warm friend, Van Buren, had been denied the nomination which was his by right, and of which he was cheated as had been Clay, and was to thus suffer again.

The bitterness of despair settled down on the Whigs and though they did not lose their love for Clay, he never had another chance to be elected or defeated.

In Clay's time the modern Presidential campaign had not been evolved. Prior to 1840 there was little of the spontaneous enthusiasm of modern times, and stump-speaking was much less in vogue, or at least on a very different scale. In State or local campaigns it was then customary in Kentucky for rival candidates to speak together and deal in the sharpest invective, but Presidential contests were on a more dignified scale. The candidates never spoke, but were accustomed to write letters which usually did a great deal more harm than good. In 1824, when Clay was first a candidate, most of the electors were chosen by the Legislatures. This continued in the case of South Carolina down to the Civil War. In 1832 Clay made no speeches, but there were mass-meetings held in many places, and the bank and tariff people were very active in putting forth the claims of their candidates. Philadelphia was alive with enthusiasm, and for a time it was supposed that the interest manifested in the great manufacturing centres of Pennsylvania indicated that Clay would carry it; but this proved a vain hope, since Jackson was able to pose as just as good a tariff man as Clay. The newspapers in those days were hardly worthy the name as compared with those of modern times. One searches the musty files in

vain to get much information of the actual progress of the campaign, but the columns are filled with long editorials and letters from prominent citizens.

The "Tippecanoe" campaign of 1840 was entirely novel in American politics, and disgusted a great many persons who saw in the extraordinary enthusiasm of the people a species of demagogy that boded ill for the country. The Whigs in 1844 endeavored to revive these meetings, and did so with some success. After the campaign was fairly well on, Clay spoke only at some dinners, which were a favorite pastime in politics, and wrote letters, as we have already seen, with most disastrous results.

He maintained his dignity on all occasions, and there is reason to believe that he had little belief in the manufactured enthusiasm employed in some sections. The attempt to make him out the product of American soil and circumstances, without giving credit to his innate powers, must have rather disgusted him. "The Mill Boy of the Slashes" was a title that ill befitted his general deportment. His pride was of a very lofty sort, and he never stooped to demagogy. One of the few occasions when he did refer to his career was in reply to an onslaught of John Randolph, which will be narrated in another chapter. In this statement he took great pride and some credit for having achieved so much under such untoward circumstances, though, as we have seen, he was much better off than the ordinary young man of his day, and the real pinch of poverty was seldom or never felt.

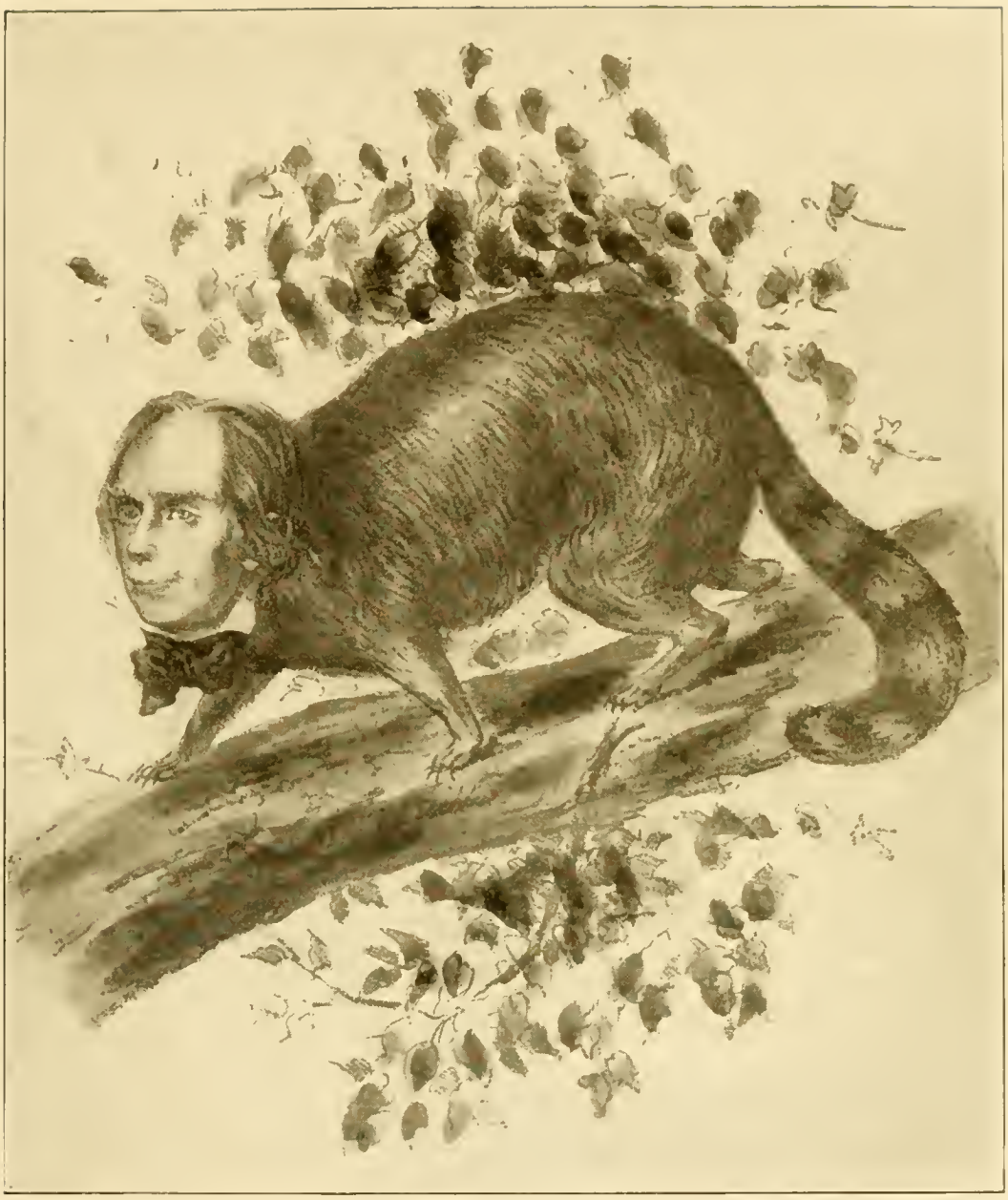
Clay's notion of a campaign was one run on party principles, and only as he deviated from this did he suffer. That he did make so many tactical mistakes was due to those amazing psychological phenomena that so often accompany an otherwise well-balanced mind.

XV

LOSING CANDIDATE FOR NOMINATIONS

BITTER as were the stings of three defeats before the people to Clay, his soul was more deeply stirred by the two occasions when he lost the nomination, and when everything indicated that he might have been elected.

The first occasion was in 1840 or, rather, in 1839, for conventions were then usually held in December, so as to give Congress a chance to work along party lines in legislation. In 1836 Clay was in the Senate, fighting Jackson, and was not permitted to make the race. Indeed, there was little chance for the opposition at that time. Jackson had ridden down all opposition and nominated Van Buren, who was triumphantly elected, as there was every reason to expect he would be, and the Whigs made no party nominations at all. Each State supported whom it pleased, the votes going to Webster, White, Mangum, and William Henry Harrison, the latter being far in the lead. The panic of 1837 came on, and in 1839 it was as plain as anything political could be that Van Buren could not be re-elected. The people were harassed with debt and distressed over finances in every way, and all the blame was laid on Van Buren, though it should have been awarded Jackson, if any one, since the legislation complained of was his, and Van Buren simply fell heir to the bad luck. This was part of Jackson's good fortune. Clay wanted the nomination badly, and, indeed, it seemed his due, as he had been the man to stand up and fight Jackson on all occasions. It is true



A CLAY CARTOON OF 1844

"THE SAME OLD COON"

(In 1840 William Henry Harrison ran for President and the Democrats at first made fun of him as a man who lived in a log cabin with a coonskin on the door. The coon became a Whig emblem as later the elephant became that of the Republican party. From the collection of Hon. Hampton L. Carson.)

that in nearly every instance he had been defeated; but, as he had mapped out the campaign and borne the burden and heat of the day, it was proper that he should have the recognition and the honors that came from such a thankless task as fighting Jackson.

The Whigs were of this opinion. They called a convention at Harrisburg, and nothing was apparently more certain than that Clay would be nominated, especially when it was found that he had secured a majority of the delegates.

It does not seem to have entered Clay's mind that the opposition of Harrison was very formidable. He was a respectable old gentleman who had a good record as an Indian fighter, had been in Congress, and held many positions of importance, but was now a clerk in the Federal Court at Cincinnati, where he supported his family on a meagre salary. He stood for nothing in particular, was colorless, harmless, and therefore, Clay thought, not formidable as a rival. In this he was mistaken. There were plenty of Clay's intimate friends who thought his record of defeats already sufficiently long. They felt that he was too prominent, too vulnerable, and that his record in the Senate was against him rather than in his favor, since he had so many enemies. In his day, Thurlow Weed, of New York, was one of the most adroit of politicians, and was getting that control of Whig machinery which lasted for so many years. He was opposed to Clay, and, after talking it over with a lot of friends, was deputed to go to Saratoga, where Clay was taking the waters, and tell him to get out. The thankless task was performed with as much delicacy as Weed could muster, which probably was little; but Clay was not convinced, and remained in the field. When the delegates met at Harrisburg there was a clear majority for Clay, and he was defeated only by chi-

canery. It was objected by many Democrats that two-thirds of the delegates were necessary to give a nomination, and for years this killed off the most prominent candidates. The Whigs made much of their majority rule, but at Harrisburg it was the minority which ruled, by a curious adoption of the unit rule. Instead of the delegates voting openly in convention, it was adroitly arranged that each State should ballot separately outside the convention and report to a committee, which tabulated the result. In this way, by manipulation and compelling each State to vote as a unit, Clay was defeated and Harrison given the nomination. No sooner was this done than the convention regretted it, for the majority of the delegates were amazed to find that they had been cheated, and many did not really understand how it had all been brought about.

Then there was a determination to appease the Clay people by nominating one of his intimate friends for second place. This was no satisfaction, and man after man refused to accept what seemed the reward of treachery. Finally, in despair, the convention took up Tyler, who, after having had a curious career in politics, was now one of Clay's close friends who burst into tears at the announcement of his defeat. Those seem to have been crocodile tears, but they were effective. Tyler, though scarcely entitled to be considered a Whig, was nominated and accepted, and the convention adjourned.

Great was Clay's wrath when he got the news. Not only was he disappointed over the result, but he was enraged, because he knew he had been cheated out of the nomination. He had been warned that such a plot was hatching, but could not credit it. He thought that Weed was mistaken as to the

opposition, but it turned out that, although the Whigs of New York really wanted Clay, they were bamboozled by Weed and others into thinking it impossible he could be elected, and so Clay lost many delegates he should have had. Clay rose up in his wrath, and said, "My friends are not worth the powder and shot it would take to kill them. If there were two Henry Clays, one of them would make the other President of the United States." The last statement is undoubtedly true. Unconsciously, Henry Clay gave the best psychological analysis of his own character that has ever been uttered. Clay was a good manager for others, but a poor one for himself. If there had been another Henry Clay to keep the original level-headed, history would certainly have had eight years of the administration of Henry Clay to record.

After the first explosion, Clay resumed his wonted composure. He suffered less than some of his friends, and when, later in the campaign, it became apparent that any Whig could have been elected, there were those who worked against Clay who bitterly repented their attitude. Some knowledge of his disappointment coming to the public, it was reported that he would not support Harrison, and a delegation went to see him on the subject. The imputation seems to have aroused him more than his own defeat. He replied,—

"Who is Henry Clay, that they should hesitate on his account? I beg of you to say that, were it the last favor I had to ask of them, they would support the ticket."

Clay did support the ticket earnestly, and it was elected. He was offered the position of Secretary of State, which he refused, and Webster accepted it.

The history of the Tyler administration is told in another place, and it is necessary here only to

pass on to his last defeat for the nomination in 1848. Clay's position during the Mexican War was a hard one in every sense of the word. Annexation had come, and he was to blame in so far as he had coquetted with the subject and befogged the conscientious people of the North, who alone were moved by what he said, and who would have been for him if he had kept his mouth shut. As a patriot, he could not, of course, do otherwise than support the war after it was started, to the extent that he wanted to see the American arms prevail. His own son, Henry Clay, Jr., who seemed most likely of all to follow in his steps, fell at Buena Vista, and from that hour Clay was a changed man. Death had been busy in his family, but this was the hardest blow of all. It is the general testimony that, had the son lived, he might have rivalled the father, such were his attainments and such his opportunities.

The time came when it was necessary for Clay to express his views on the war, as he was lending a willing ear to demands that he again be a candidate. He made an opportunity of his own. On November 13, 1847, he made an address to his constituents at Lexington, commonly known in political literature as his Lexington speech, but locally always referred to as his market-house speech, because it was delivered in an old market-house, which was crowded to the walls, while thousands surrounded the building outside and heard his words through open windows. It was the last of his great speeches to his constituents, and at seventy-one the fire was not dimmed nor his ardor abated. There are still living in Lexington (1904) many men who remember that speech, and all view it as one of the great incidents in their lives. As printed, the speech seems to be much shorter than when spoken, for it is said to have consumed several hours in delivery, and many things

which were of a purely local nature were omitted when it was prepared for publication. The market-house was thronged with the best blood of Kentucky, and when the old man came onto the improvised platform, a roar of applause arose which lasted for many minutes. When he began, it was in a low tone of voice, and he was hardly in condition, seeing that a few days before he had made a three-hours' argument in court. Those who remember the occasion say that his voice was pitched in a lower key than usual during most of the speech, but that it was heard with distinctness at the very outskirts of the crowd. The power which he possessed of making his voice heard is said to have been so exceptional that in the Senate gallery visitors could hear Clay whisper to a colleague when Benton was roaring one of his wild buffalo speeches.

At the market-house Clay spoke for a time with calmness and slower than usual, but as he warmed up to his subject all the Promethean fire of youth appeared. "I stood at the very back of the market-house," says one who heard him, "and I never missed a word of that speech. When he got about half-way through I could see his visage become livid, his tall, graceful form swayed with the suppleness of youth, and in a short time his eyes burned like balls of fire. I have never heard such a speech, cannot imagine that any other man ever could have made one. His lips seemed touched as with a coal of fire from the altar, and those eyes of his seemed to me like burning suns. It was weeks before I could get away from the inspiration of that occasion, and to-day I can remember it as if it occurred yesterday."

This speech was an arraignment of Polk for bringing on the war by his despatch of Taylor to the Rio Grande in defiance of right, and for the sole purpose

of provoking a combat. He denounced the administration for its perfidy and unconstitutional acts, and wound up with a series of resolutions, the purport of which was that the war should be concluded as soon as possible on honorable terms, that there should be no dismemberment or annexation of Mexico, and that "we disavow any wish or desire on our part to acquire any foreign territory whatever for the purpose of propagating slavery or of introducing slaves from the United States into such foreign territory."

Here was Henry Clay at his best, the true Henry Clay, whose voice was for national honor and against the extension of slavery. Had he made such a speech or avowed such sentiments without qualification three years before, nothing could have kept him from the Presidency.

This Lexington speech was received with great favor in the North, and for a time it seemed as if Clay was again to be the standard-bearer. It had taken some time to rouse the old man once more to the contest, but, again engaged, he was anxious to succeed, and it does not appear that at this time he had the slightest notion that he would fail. One deficiency in Clay's make-up was that he was ever more conscious of the praise bestowed on him than of the machinations of those who opposed him. He had now passed the psalmist's allotted term of years, and was reconciled to God and man ; but he was anxious for one more effort, the more so because it was evident that victory was in the grasp of the Whig candidate. But as, a generation before, he had not surmised nor rightly estimated the rising star of Jackson, so now he could not believe, would not believe, that another frontier general, a man of even less experience than Jackson, was to be his most formidable rival. When he

found that Taylor's candidacy was not only serious, but that the latter insisted on remaining in the field even after Clay had announced himself, his wrath was once more aroused. He did not believe Taylor could win, and, indeed, nothing could have defeated Clay for the nomination except the action of his nearest and dearest friends. There were those in Kentucky and elsewhere who for forty years had stood shoulder to shoulder with Clay, who had supported him in every contest either for the nomination or afterwards, who loved him as their own heart's blood, but who did not believe he could be elected. Among these was old John J. Crittenden, Clay's colleague and bosom friend, who would rather have seen Clay President than any man living, but whose unalterable conviction was that he could not be elected. So deep was this feeling that, for the first time in history, Kentucky refused to unanimously support her favorite son, and in convention a majority went for Taylor. This and the action of Ohio made Clay's nomination at the Philadelphia convention impossible, and Taylor was chosen.

This was the bitterest pill in Clay's long career. A man who had spent most of his life in the swamps of Florida or on the frontier fighting Indians, who was only a colonel when the war broke out; a man whose sole claim to fame was that he had won a few battles; that the people should prefer such a man to Clay was to him gall and wormwood. As it turned out, Clay might have been elected in any event, due to the Van Buren defection; but this knowledge came too late. Clay was, time and time again, asked to support Taylor openly; but this he refused to do, though voting for him. Among the letters which are preserved by the family is one from Taylor to Clay, after the election, written from Baton Rouge, November 17, 1848. There had been some

friction between the two men, owing to the fact that private letters between the two had been made public. Of course, Taylor was anxious to be on good terms with Clay, and made overtures which had not resulted very happily. This letter is written in a bold hand and is not strong on grammar, but is a sturdy exposition of the feelings of "Old Rough and Ready."

"My Dear Sir :

"On my return a day or two since after a short absence I found your highly esteemed letter of the 23d ultimo, for which accept my cordial thanks : the one referred to written by you in May last reached me by due course of mail, and I owe you an apology for not replying to it, which I deferred doing from day to day under the expectation that certain events would occur which I wished to refer to in my reply, but which were so long in taking place as to induce me to give up doing so altogether : said letter was entirely satisfactory as regarded the matter alluded to (and to put an end to the misrepresentations growing out of the same going the rounds through the newspapers, I once caused a short article to that effect to be published in the *Picayune*, of New Orleans, which may have met your eye) and relieved me from anxiety, as I believed the course pursued by certain individuals touching our correspondence was calculated, if not intended, to bring about a state of distrust, if not of unkind feelings between you and myself as well as some of my friends, which, had they succeeded in doing, would, so far as I am concerned, have been a source of much pain and mortification to me.

"There certainly could be no objection or impropriety in your permitting any of your friends to read any of the letters I wrote you, who ought not to have made any use of them for any purpose without your authority, as there was an implied confidence, at least, which ought not to have been violated. It is true I allowed a few very confidential friends to read yours written to me, nor am I aware that any use was made of them and furnished to a member of Congress or any one else, although I have no doubt you have been informed I had done so."

After referring to matters not important here, he continues :

"I trust I have many devoted personal friends who from various reasons were opposed to my reaching the office in question and took every honorable and proper means in their power to prevent my success, and I shall, certainly would never think of censuring them, much less to permit it on my part to interrupt our friendly relations because they done [sic] what they thought right in opposing my election to an office which they thought another better qualified to fill."

He then declines with regret an invitation Clay had given him to visit Ashland. This letter was evidently a strong effort to conciliate Clay and establish friendly relations. It failed, and when Clay went to the Senate for the last time, it was as a bitter factional opponent of Taylor.

Even in 1852, when Clay was seventy-five years old, there were many who desired him to be a candidate, and there are those who say that the old man at times would brighten up and think that he might win, but these must have been only momentary flashes; for, when the subject was broached to him in any way calling for a public answer, his voice was always in the negative, though not unqualifiedly so. He did leave his beloved Ashland for the Senate, in obedience to what he believed a call of duty, but the Presidency was lost to him forever.

XVI

CLAY IN DEFEAT

NOTHING shows the true temper of a man so clearly as his conduct under misfortune. Clay had his share of disappointments,—more of a certain sort than any man in the country,—and for the most part he bore himself so nobly that he seemed to win after all. Outside of the Presidency he had only one personal disappointment,—the failure to be appointed Secretary of State by Monroe. He was offered many other honors which he would not accept. In his fights with Jackson and Tyler he came off second best, as a rule; but these were over matters of legislation rather than efforts for personal advancement.

He took his defeat in 1824 with philosophy and not without humor. He had figured out very nicely how he could succeed, but events would not follow his calculations, so he treated the result with considerable good humor, though not without sarcasm. When friends of Adams, Jackson, and Crawford were buzzing around him, and telling him what a great man he was, and how sorry they were that he could not have been in the race; but so long as he was out of it, he ought to vote for their man, Clay took it in good part for a while and then got a little miffed. He undoubtedly considered himself much better qualified for the Presidency than any one of the candidates, and it was natural that he should have considered how different things would have been had his friends carried out their promises, or had Crawford been induced to retire from the field at a time when his health broke down. When the cor-

rupt-bargain story was circulated he got angry. Choosing Adams as the "least of two evils," he objected to objurgations, and wrote a defence to Blair, who was later to become one of his severest critics. He considered the country safe with Adams, but not with Jackson, making the astonishing statement, "I cannot believe that killing two thousand five hundred Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies for the various difficult and complicated duties of the Presidency."

This was spleen; but Clay's animosity towards Jackson was founded on just considerations and lasted through life. Clay could forgive anything but an assault on his honor, and Jackson either made or believed the lie about Clay, and continued to assert it after its falsity had been demonstrated to the world and the chief conspirators had acknowledged their guilt. The only scars that the campaign of 1824 left were those due to the corrupt-bargain story, and these were deep enough.

The defeat in 1832 was foreseen by Clay at the start, but after the campaign was well under way he seemed to take courage. It is very difficult for a man to believe in defeat when all his friends are telling him he is going to win. Clay was ever deceived by the warmth of personal attachment of his intimates. He stimulated them when in his presence, and they were so conscious of his superior merits that they could not believe he could fail. It was unfortunate for him that there were so many cool, calculating men in the opposition who had their minds fixed on certain ends and were not to be carried away by the intoxication of Clay's presence or even his hypnotic power. Thus it came about that Clay seemed to think in 1832 that he might win, thought so after most persons had given up the contest. Clay took the matter philosophically once

more, and the only record made of his feelings on the subject is in a letter to Francis Brooke, one of his most intimate friends, in which he says, "It is useless to dwell on the issue of the Presidential election, respecting which we were so greatly disappointed. From whatever causes it proceeded, it is now irrevocable."

That was taking defeat easy, and in any event there was so much work for Clay to do in putting down nullification that he would have had little time for repining, even had he been inclined to do so.

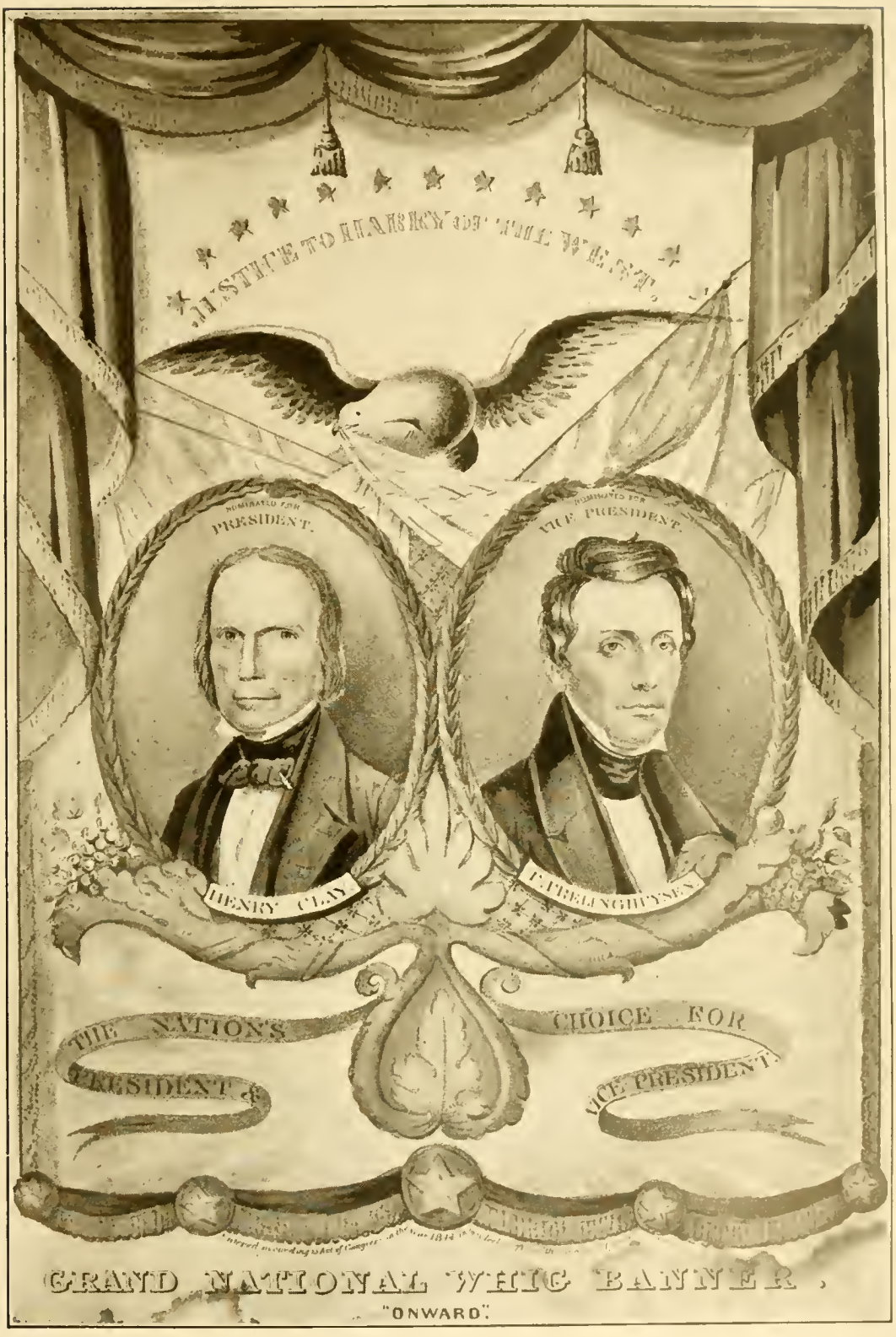
His first real grief came when he was defeated for the nomination in 1840, as already narrated. That he was justified in giving vent to his anger is unquestioned. He had been cheated out of the nomination, but took it with composure after the first outburst of anger. It is common to say that Clay could have been elected that year, and the surface indications are that he would have, but he had such a genius for defeat that such an assumption is unwarranted. Clay knew perfectly well that he had been defeated by his warm friends, and that they had opposed him because they feared he could not be elected. A small man would have broken with his friends on such a course of action, but it was characteristic of Clay that he did not do so. With a magnanimity seldom equalled in history, he accepted their verdict. This was particularly difficult, for there have been few prouder men than Clay, few so high-strung; and that under all the disappointments of his life he preserved his good-nature is a striking testimony to the fundamental worth of his character. No man ever sought the Presidency so often, no man ever wanted it so badly, and no man was ever so treated. His experiences would have made a pessimist out of any but a big-minded, big-hearted man. He supported Harrison

and rejoiced in his election. Had Old Tippecanoe lived, it is certain that Clay would have carried out his programme in every detail, all the acts would have been signed, and Clay would have succeeded in 1844 with as little struggle as is possible in politics. Here is where accident came once more to vex him. If Harrison had not insisted on making a long speech in the open air when it was raining ; if he had not refused to take the ordinary precautions after he had become drenched to the skin. There are a good many ifs here, such as were always getting in the way of Clay's ambition.

The defeat of 1844 was heart-rending. This was Clay's best chance. He had won his fight and then threw it away. Clay had remained at Ashland to get the returns, which came in slowly from the various States which held elections at various dates. When it was found that New York had deserted him, the agony was over. His family were crushed, his friends almost frantic with rage, vexation, and grief. It was said that for days leading Whigs could not meet in the cities of New York and Philadelphia without bursting into tears. It was not so much that they had principles at stake, and that the election of Polk meant war with Mexico, extension of slavery, and a revision of the tariff; all these things were serious enough, but their real grief was that Clay had been defeated. As a psychological phenomenon this has never had an equal in this country, and its only approach was forty years later in the case of Mr. Blaine. The curious part of the affair was that, as a rule, the Whigs were not emotional. They were business and professional men of standing, and little given to wearing their hearts on their coat-sleeves. They could have seen a dozen Harrisons, or Websters, or Claytons defeated without more than a passing regret; but that gallant Harry

of the West should have lost by such a narrow margin, and, as they believed, by treachery, was to them a personal misfortune that amounted to a family bereavement.

No sooner was the result known than letters began to pour in on Clay, telling him how it all happened and condoling with him. He must have had some comfort out of the personal expressions of regret, even if it did not affect the result. Millard Fillmore, who was defeated for Governor of New York, wrote that he did not mind his own failure, but he was depressed that Clay had lost. Crittenden could hardly command his feelings enough to write, but he insisted that Clay was the only man in the country who was not really a loser by the result. Not only private letters came, but resolutions by all sorts of political bodies were passed, asserting their grief and declaring that the country had suffered a calamity from which it was not soon to recover. Indeed, one would suppose that there was not only not a Whig in the country who was not wearing mourning and determined to see Clay in the Presidency next time, no matter what happened, but there were of the opposition not a few who were sorry they had not supported him, while it is certain that many of those who voted for Birney repented too late their persistence in adhering to an impossible candidate, by which they elected Polk. In truth, from all that was said and done, from all the lamentations and protestations that rose to high heaven, one would suppose that the man who would suggest any other candidate for 1848 would have been anathema. On the day before and the day afterwards Clay was the popular idol, but at the crucial time the desertions were too many. A clergyman who wrote to him at this time and suggested to him the consolations of religion, received a reply in which Clay said,—



A CLAY CAMPAIGN BANNER OF 1844

(In 1844 this form of political advertising was popular. The design here reproduced was used for banners and colored lithographs. "Justice" in this case referred to the fact that Clay was the party choice in 1840, and had been cheated out of the nomination. From the collection of Hon. Hampton L. Carson.)

"I am greatly obliged by the desire you manifest that I should seek in the resources of religion consolation for all the vexations and disappointments of life. I hope you will continue your prayers for me, since I trust I am not altogether unworthy of them. I have long been convinced of the paramount importance of the Christian religion. I have for many years fervently sought its blessings. I shall persevere in seeking them, and I hope ultimately to attain a firm faith and confidence in its promises. There is nothing for which I feel so anxious. May God, in His infinite mercy, grant what I so ardently desire."

The effectual, fervent prayers of the righteous in this case availed much, for it was not long afterwards that he was baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal church. Not long before this he had asked a friend for a book which would be of assistance in confirming him in the faith he sought, and he read it with avidity. Soon after his defeat he was sitting with some friends at Ashland, discussing the future of the country, which was anything but pleasant, seeing that war with Mexico was considered inevitable, when he pointed his finger at the Bible lying on the table and said, "Gentlemen, I do not know anything but that book which can reconcile us to such events."

Soon after the unhappy news was learned he was walking the turnpike in front of Ashland, when a woman who was passing by on horseback, on seeing him, burst into tears. Always sympathetic in distress, Clay inquired the cause of her grief, and she replied,—

"I have lost my father, my husband, and my children, and passed through other painful trials; but all of them together have not given me so much sorrow as the late disappointment of your friends."

But the most impressive and the saddest occasion of all was the visit of the Presidential Electors of Kentucky to Ashland in December. They had met

at Frankfort on the previous day and cast their votes for Clay, though they knew the formality was useless. They marched in a body to Ashland, and Mr. Underwood, their leader, made a touching speech which moved every one to tears. Clay was nearing seventy, and was, as he called himself, "an old stag;" yet he had several years of usefulness ahead of him. He was much affected by the visit, and it was some compensation to him that his beloved Kentucky had cast her vote for him, as she had done in every contest in which he had been engaged.

In a letter written a few days later he expressed his regrets, and said it would be affectation for him to assume indifference to the result; but he maintained that his personal disappointment was of little account, and the state of the Union was to be taken into consideration. Clay had been very bitter during the campaign over the calumnies which had been uttered against him, and on one occasion insisted on making a public speech, in which he vented his wrath upon the calumniators, and, in scorning and defying them, it is said that the lightning seemed to flash from his eyes; but after the election was over he seems, as usual, to have forgotten his enemies. To a friend he writes that he supposes that many of the calumnies never reached his notice, and "I wish to forget them and their vile authors as soon as I can. I hope God will forgive them. I do not desire to soil myself by any contact with them."

It is certain that for a time he had no intention of making another race. His wife, who never shared his optimism, was anxious that he should not be a candidate; but, after his friends had begun to write him beseeching letters, after conventions and Legislatures and public meetings had endorsed him, he consented to become a candidate in 1848, only to lose the nomination by the action of the delegation

from his own Kentucky. We can forgive a man of seventy-two a good many things, and it is necessary that we look with some charity on the feeling of resentment which he maintained towards Crittenden until on his death-bed. He and Crittenden had been the warmest friends, and when the latter divided the delegation and secured the nomination of Taylor, Clay felt the sting very keenly. Thereafter his relations with Crittenden were civil, but not cordial, and for a time there was a real estrangement; but when the old man was on his death-bed he sent for Crittenden. In the shadow of the grave the reconciliation was complete, and Clay urged his sons to forget the past and treat Crittenden with every consideration.

As to Taylor, the situation was somewhat different. He could not but look on him as a usurper. He had known Taylor long, and had received a touching letter from him when his son was killed at Buena Vista; but Clay not only wished to be President himself, but he had a great fear of military Presidents. He thought the country had been severely strained when Jackson ruled for eight years, and he wrote that he believed the election of Taylor would mean that thereafter only military officers would be available as candidates, and that the republic would be in danger. It is easy to see how Clay could have felt thus on the subject. He had labored for nearly fifty years to build up the nation and his party. Whatever the Whig party stood for, Clay mainly was entitled to the credit, and he could not believe the country wanted Taylor, or that it ought to have him if it did want him. In this he was mistaken. The country wanted Taylor and got him, and Clay was not mollified by this. For a time it seemed as if he might get on pretty well with Taylor, but it was impossible. Taylor sent his

son as minister to Portugal, and that appeased Clay's wrath somewhat; but they were opposed to each other over the Omnibus bill, and their relations soon became cold and were not changed at the time Taylor died.

It cannot be said that Clay cherished resentment. He simply could not take Taylor on faith before election and he had no confidence in his policy afterwards. He considered the great party which he had erected was being destroyed, and in 1852 he plainly saw defeat was at hand. Refusing to be a candidate himself, he gave his voice in favor of Fillmore as against Webster or General Scott; but the party had no use for his advice, and nominated Scott, who rode majestically to defeat, and the Whig party went into liquidation. By this time Clay was dead, and without him the party had no cause for existence.

Clay's bearing in defeat, barring a natural exhibition of anger on occasion, was magnificent. No man was more sorely tried than he, and none so soon resumed composure. He discussed affairs with an impersonality that amazed his friends, who could not bring themselves up to his high level. After all, how vain are regrets over Clay's defeats! The Presidency could have brought him nothing but a titular honor, and it is quite easy to imagine that he might have made either a failure as a President or his administration might have been only respectable. Clay's forte was not as an administrator; and, though we can imagine he would have had a brilliant Cabinet and a policy of enlarged statesmanship, there are reasons also for thinking he might have been sorely disappointed. The only regret is that he aspired the place so often. No character, however great or noble, can help being marred by constant defeat. Had Clay never aspired the Presidency, it

is certain that he would still live in history, not only as one of our greatest statesmen, but probably without a rival. And, indeed, had he had no ambitions, it is likely the Presidency would have been thrust upon him, as it was on lesser men. Clay's conduct in his campaigns has laid him open to the just charge of vacillation and wavering under fire. Though there is ample apology for his course, it cannot be said that it adorned an otherwise almost spotless career.

XVII

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

CLAY is probably best known as the "Father of the American System of Protection." This is not as it should be. Clay did not originate the system and denied its parentage. Though he was undoubtedly its most prominent exponent, there were times when he seemed to be, and was virulently accused of being, latitudinarian on the subject. Still, he must be accredited with most protective legislation of his own and later times, and is entitled to the more credit because he was not one who personally had a large interest in the system.

He began his career as an exponent of national aid to internal improvements. In his second fractional term in the Senate he came out strongly as a friend of American industries, and later as a believer in the distribution of the surplus from land sales among the States, according to population. These three ideas comprised his "American System," and not protection alone, as is so commonly supposed. His notions of protection were probably derived from the fact that he lived in a hemp country, and that staple needed a market in the East. It is not at all surprising that the young planter found himself at the start a moderate protectionist. His early training in Virginia had certainly given him no definite notions on the subject, and it was only when he contemplated the immense valley of the Mississippi, with its potentialities and its far removal from the leading markets, the idea came to him that it was much better to give trade to the Western peo-

ple than to those across the Atlantic. His views at this time (1810) were moderate, well defined, but not based on any thorough examination of the subject. There had always been a semblance of protection in tariff legislation. The second bill passed by the American Congress was one levying duties on imports, and in the title it was expressly stated that one of the objects, aside from raising revenue, was the protection of American manufactures. In the next few years there were many amendments ; the protection idea grew steadily, and was finally mixed up in the contest for the permanent capital of the country. Pennsylvania willingly surrendered its own claims for additional protection, and the Potomac site was thereby selected.

All these early measures were, however, moderate, so far as the rate of duty was concerned. They did not produce enough revenue, even when increased, so that an excise tax was finally laid. When the war of 1812 came on, which was emphatically Henry Clay's war, the tariff was doubled to meet a portion of the deficit ; though, as a matter of fact, very little was imported, owing to the blockade in the latter portion of the war. At the end of the contest it was seen that there must be a radical change in our whole financial and economic system. The national debt had enormously increased, and the revenue laws were illy adjusted to existing needs. Clay was Speaker of the House, and took charge of the matter in energetic fashion. He secured the charter of a new national bank, changing his views as to its constitutionality and deeming necessity a sufficient excuse. The tariff law of 1816 was largely his work, and it was the first effort to place protection on an alleged scientific basis, by which is meant that the exact measure of protection afforded was as nearly as possible proportioned to the difference

between the cost of the imported goods and those made in this country. And now developed a curious situation which has been commented on by every antagonist of the principle of protection. New England, which was, perhaps, the section most benefited by the new law, came out strongly against it. Webster was in the House and fast making a career. It had so happened that when the Embargo and Non-Importation acts and the war deprived New England of her chief industry, that of shipping, the people had turned, with true Yankee enterprise, to making things they could not get otherwise.

It was a girl near Boston who made a straw hat when she could buy none, and it was not long until Massachusetts straw hats were to be found all over the country. These were not made so much in factories as in the homes ; and when this industry was so profitable, others followed in quick succession, until New England became a congeries of towns, villages, and homes where everything was manufactured, from a horseshoe nail to shoes and wool hats. Much of this work was done by girls, or by the whole family in the evenings. While the Southern planter sat on his porch, drinking his mint-julep, smoking his tobacco, and counting up how much his slaves had earned for him, and spending it in advance, the Yankee was hard at work, early and late, anxious to provide for his large family and to save up something for a rainy day. In fact, there cannot be imagined a greater contrast between the social and economic life of two sections in one country than existed at this time between the North and the South. It is not so remarkable that there were constantly arising causes of friction between two civilizations so divergent as that they ever managed to get along together at all.

Webster and other New England people were

against the theory of protection at the start. It seemed to them that it was native industry and ingenuity which helped manufacturing, and they doubted whether under Clay's system they would gain as much as they would lose.

Clay had now developed his system much more broadly than in the early days of his career in the Senate. While in Europe he had made a study of economic conditions, and found the tariff walls existing everywhere. He looked not so much to a system of reprisals as to one which should build up the independence of the American nation. We have seen that he was not entirely satisfied with the close of the war of 1812. He would have preferred to carry it on for a few more years, until the country had demonstrated its capacity to make itself respected in the field. It so happened that events of which Clay was ignorant at the time gave the national arms all the prestige they needed; but, in truth, the country was still very young, still dependent on Europe, and Clay's notion was to make it as self-supporting as possible. The tariff law of 1816 was a moderate one, according to modern standards. The maximum duty was thirty-five per cent., being placed on articles which the United States could supply sufficient for the demand. Goods which were only partially supplied by domestic production, and which it was hoped to stimulate, were taxed about twenty per cent., and the other articles were on a purely revenue basis. It was emphatically a Southern measure, Calhoun being one of its chief exponents.

The Federalists, who were a constantly declining faction and confined largely to New England, opposed the measure, while the Republicans, followers of Jefferson, supported it. Calhoun and Lowndes, along with Clay, fought for a bill that was avowedly

protective, and which Calhoun was later to repudiate. In enacting this measure, set speeches do not seem to have been made so much as a running discussion on the various items as they were taken up. None of Clay's speeches at the time is reported, and his efforts were probably confined largely to work in Committee of the Whole, when he was not in the chair.

In 1820 Clay considered that the existing tariff bill had not been well prepared, that the protection afforded had not met expectations, and that as a revenue producer it had failed. The Secretary of the Treasury recommended a new law, the general terms of which he sketched. Clay was now a more ardent protectionist than ever, and made a set speech on the subject which set forth his views very clearly. He laid more stress on the need for independence than for actual protection to manufacturers or higher wages to laborers. He said,—

"The truth is, and it is vain to disguise it, that we are a sort of independent colonies of England,—politically free, commercially slaves. Gentlemen tell us of the advantage of a free exchange of the produce of the world. But they tell us of what has never existed, does not exist, and perhaps never will exist. They invoke us to give perfect freedom on our side, while in the ports of every other nation we are met with a code of odious restrictions, shutting out entirely a great part of our produce and letting in only so much as they cannot possibly do without. At present I will say that I, too, am a friend of free trade, but it must be a free trade of perfect reciprocity. If the governing consideration were cheapness, if national independence were to weigh nothing, if honor nothing, why not subsidize foreign powers to defend us? Why not hire Swiss or Hessian mercenaries to protect us? Why not get our arms of all kinds, as we do in part, the blankets and clothing of our soldiers abroad?"

Turning to the labor side, he expressed gratification at a visit he had recently made to New England,

where he had seen so many young boys and girls at work earning wages, for the factory system was becoming developed by this time. He mentioned that he had seen, in Waltham, the daughter of a State Senator of Massachusetts at work, something he could not have matched in the whole South. He said there were too many people out of work in the country; and that he was not afraid of child labor—a subject which attracts much attention in these days—is shown by this remark:

"Can it be doubted that if the crowds of little mendicant boys and girls who infest this edifice, and assail us every day, at its very thresholds, as we come in and go out, begging for a cent, were employed in some manufacturing establishment, it would be better for them and the city?"

Even then there were those who thought it wrong to put small children into factories, but Clay scouted the idea. In that day there were no public schools of any account, and a great mass of children were raised in ignorance and became vicious. New England once more objected to the bill, at which Clay could not withhold his astonishment. He declared that it was poor policy for New England to complain of one or two items in the bill, whereas the whole scheme of protection was so greatly for the benefit of that section. He called attention to the fact that a large amount of the pension money went to New England. Whether or not this was meant as a thrust it is difficult to say. The fact was undoubted; but the claim has been set up many times that New England had longer muster-rolls than her actual service in the field entitled her to, and that many of the pensions were not deserved. This was the sort of argument that caused as much sectional strife in that day as fifty years later.

All Clay's eloquence could do was to secure the passage of the bill by the House. In the Senate it met with strong opposition, and was lost by a single vote, several New England Senators opposing it.

Clay was out of Congress for two years, and came back to find there was a change in opinion on the workings of the existing tariff. The revenue was insufficient and New England was losing her antipathy. In fact, she was, after this period, eager for all the benefits she could secure. Clay was again Speaker, and as such he took charge of the new tariff bill.

The speech which he made March 30, 31, 1824, was the most important effort of the sort in his career up to that time. He had been trying his best to evolve a system which would have a scientific basis, or one resembling it. It turned out that in this, as in every other case of the kind, special interests had to be provided for to secure votes, and the result was not all that he wished, though, apparently, it was a great advance over the law of 1816. He now made it plain to New England and to the Southern planters that the great prosperity they had enjoyed up to the laying of the Embargo was not so much because nature had been kind as that the Napoleonic wars had been our opportunity, that we controlled shipping because it was neutral, and that our food was needed to feed armies. As a proof of this he called attention to the extraordinary shipment of foreign goods to this country after the close of the war of 1812, and the fact that, in spite of the tariff of 1816, American industries had revived little or none because the law was not adapted to the changed conditions of international commerce. His great argument was that we must have a home market for our goods. "Agriculture," he declared, "is our greatest interest. It

ought ever to be predominant. All others should bend to it."

This is no longer the case, but was strictly true in his day. His argument was to show that the farmer would be greatly benefited if those who were not engaged in agriculture were employed in some productive industry. "We must then somewhat change our course. We must give a new direction to some portion of our industry."

He entered into a rather extended argument to show that there was actually not enough employment for the existing population, and made a great point of the fact that, for every vacancy in political office, or even at the prospect of one, there were hundreds rushing to get the place,—a condition which seems to have been worse in those days than now. He once stopped in the middle of a very earnest argument to call attention to the fact that the doorkeeper of the House had been sick for some time, and there was a tremendous pressure to get his place, although he was still alive. Clay assured the members that he had been to see the old man, and found him convalescent. Indeed, he made much of the fact that his first knowledge of his illness was when he was asked to endorse a man for his place. This was a rather homely illustration, but it seemed to fit the existing situation. More avenues of labor were needed.

Turning upon those who had attacked the principle of protection as outrageous, he said,—

"This tariff seems to have been regarded as a sort of monster, huge and deformed,—a wild beast, endowed with tremendous powers of destruction, about to be let loose on the people, if not to devour them, at least to consume their substance. But let us calm our passions and deliberately survey this alarming, this terrible being. The sole object of the tariff is to tax the produce of foreign industry with the view of promoting American industry. The tax is exclusively

levelled at foreign industry. That is the avowed and the direct purpose of the tariff. If it subjects any part of American industry to burdens, that is an effect not intended, but is altogether incidental and perfectly voluntary."

This sounds very much like more recent speeches. Indeed, it would be hard to find, in any of the myriad pleas in favor of protection that have been made since this time, anything which varies much from the argument of Clay. In later times he changed his views on some details, but his speech of 1824 still stands as one of the beacon-lights to those who believe in the principle. In closing, Clay made a statement that sounds rather strange in these days when protection is claimed to be the robbery of the poor for the benefit of the rich. The contest was close and Clay was not certain that the bill would pass, and he appealed to all who loved the poor man to come to the aid of the bill, since arrayed against it was the most brilliant talent in the House.

"We are opposed by the rich and powerful in the land, the executive government gives us, if any, a cold and equivocal support," while the importing interests, British interests, and the newspaper press, including the subsidized organ at the capital, were all against the bill.

At this time Clay was a candidate for the Presidency, and his bill was not only for the public at large, but his speech may be supposed to have had some element of appeal to popularity. It passed by the narrow majority of five, New England still being largely opposed to the measure, and for the last time. Hereafter, as stated, she was ranged on the side of as high protective duties as she could get. The Senate passed the measure by a small majority, after making some amendments, and Monroe signed the bill.

Clay lost the Presidency, but gained the Secretary-

ship of State, which took him out of active participation in legislation for four years. He had little to do with the tariff of 1828, commonly styled the "Tariff of Abominations," and was not entirely in harmony with its provisions. By this time the manufacturers had a taste of blood, and found the American system was much to their liking. The rates were raised very much above those of 1824, against the protest of the Southern representatives, who continued to claim that they were getting no benefit from the tariff, that the goods they must purchase were greatly enhanced, while the cotton they sold abroad brought no more, and, in effect, the hatred of European nations to our tariff laws resulted in what was practically an export tax on cotton, which was against the Constitution. These arguments availed nothing, and the bill became a law.

The years from 1816 to 1824 had been conspicuous for business depression. Clay afterwards asserted that they were the worst in our history. The seven years succeeding the tariff of 1824 were those of unexampled prosperity. Clay's argument and that of protectionists generally was that this was due to the fact that adequate protection was for the first time injected into the law of 1824. This *post hoc, propter hoc* argument has been used ever since by protectionists to account for every rise and fall of business activity and prosperity, and has been as resolutely denied by those who object to the system. As a matter of fact, the two bills produced a large amount of revenue, more than was needed, considering how rapidly the public lands were being sold. Moroever, the facts were with Clay.

When Clay returned to the Senate, in 1831, he was a full-fledged candidate for the Presidency, and proposed to put all his notions of the American system into one basket, as it were, and force the issue

on Jackson. The bank and land distribution belong to other chapters, and we are to consider here only the tariff bill. Seeing that there must be a change in the law, Clay stood out for protection on those goods which America could make only when given such an advantage, while he favored low duties or none on all articles which did not enter into competition, except on silks, wines, and a few such luxuries, and free raw materials for the manufacturer. Iron and textiles received the greatest benefits, and this inflamed the Southern planters still more, as these were articles they must purchase to carry on their plantations. Clay had visited the South, and had made, at Natchez and elsewhere, speeches in which he denied that the tariff had imposed any burdens on the planters, while the rise in the price of their staple was due, as he claimed, to the fact that American manufacturers were in the market for a very large amount of cotton, though not diminishing the foreign demand. At Cincinnati he made a speech by invitation, and an effort was made to "put him in a hole," as politicians would now say. While most of his speech was against nullification and directly aimed at South Carolina, which was already trying to make trouble, the tariff underlay the whole dispute, and Clay treated it fully.

It was in this speech that he made the remark so often quoted afterwards, that he was travelling on purely private business "with my friend Charles (a black boy, residing in my family, for whom I feel the same sort of attachment that I do for my own children), without sword, pistol, or musket." This was the valet whom he had finally to almost force into freedom after he had refused to accept the boon for many years.

In the Senate he once more made an extended speech on the tariff, which was ostensibly a measure

to reduce the revenue which was entirely too large. Practically it was a bid for the Presidency, a very proper one in line with the custom of the times. Clay was no coward. As a statesman he never hesitated to make any announcement which seemed to him correct or to endorse any legislation that seemed to him proper. As a candidate he appeared to lose his latitude very easily. It is almost impossible in these days to select Presidential candidates out of either branch of Congress. A few have been so chosen, but the experiment has been disastrous. Clay was not only in the Senate, but so far as his own party was concerned, he was the Senate, and he was ready for all responsibilities.

Already Clay had noted the rising tide of opposition in the South ; had done his best to explain to the men of the cotton belt that they were foolish and mistaken in supposing that there was a devil in the tariff that was destroying them. His course was a plain one, to reduce all tariffs that were not protective and adjust those which were, so that the country would soon be independent. He made no secrecy of his plan, and when he found that South Carolina was fighting it there was no withdrawal. He boldly attacked Calhoun for retreating from his former position when, as in 1816, he fought for protection. Calhoun was then in the chair as Vice-President, and interrupted to say that if the gentleman (Mr. Clay) wished to make any remark as personal to him (Calhoun), he must say that in his opinion the bill was unconstitutional.

This was a rather unusual interruption of the decorum of debate, but Clay came back at him saying :

" When, sir, I contended with you side by side, and with less zeal, perhaps, than you exhibited, in 1816,

I did not then understand you to consider the policy forbidden by the Constitution."

Calhoun looked down with that mild expression of which he was capable, and spoke in the most impersonal way, saying that the constitutional question was not debated at that time, and that he had never expressed an opinion contrary to what he had just uttered. This was mere sophistry, and Clay instantly replied :

"It is true, the question was not debated in 1816; and why not? Because it was not debatable; it was then believed not fairly to arise. It never was made until the discussion of the tariff of 1824."

This was true. Indeed, the theory that protection is unconstitutional is perhaps the greatest invention of Calhoun's mind. It was considered silly in his day because it had been the universal custom from time immemorial, and was used by various nations, according to circumstances. Even Madison, who was as strict a constitutionalist as ever lived, who may be said to be the father of the Constitution, was a protectionist, and in letters which the Clay family has preserved there are those in which Madison discusses details of the tariff of 1824, which he approves in principle, but has some question as to the desirability of stirring up too much conflict between the sections.

It was the great misfortune of Clay that he never could avoid personalities in debate. At times he seemed to seek them. In this speech he made an assault upon the aged and revered Albert Gallatin which is one of the most indefensible acts of his life. The two men had known each other for many years. During Clay's two fractional terms in the Senate, as a youth, Gallatin was Secretary of the Treasury. When Clay made the war, without means or men, it was Gallatin who had the terrible task of going to

THOMAS H. CLAY

(A son of Henry Clay, who was with him in his last hours. The resemblance to his father was very marked, and an interesting comparison may be made of this picture with the portrait of Henry Clay facing p. 252. From a portrait in possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky.)

a poverty-stricken country, and to sections which were opposed to the war, to raise the money. Gallatin was himself a foreigner by birth, but one of the greatest of Americans. In finance he stands second only to that other foreigner, Alexander Hamilton, and along with Robert Morris. Gallatin was given millions to raise, and all he could finally do was to go to Stephen Girard and John Jacob Astor, both foreigners, and get the money absolutely needed to keep the country from bankruptcy. These men pledged their private fortunes, and did carry the country through as best they could. At a time when there were a good many men in the country, of American birth, who might have done much for the nation and did not, it was a foreign Secretary who had to work through two foreigners to raise the money to prosecute Clay's war.

Moreover, Gallatin had sat with Clay on the Commission at Ghent, and none knew better than Clay how Gallatin's suavity and good-humor had prevented a rupture among the American members. Therefore it is with pain that we read in this speech an attack on Gallatin, who now, in his old age, had essayed to speak on a subject concerning which he had at least a right to talk, and concerning which he had more practical experience than any American living. He had raised his voice in favor of a tariff that should not exceed twenty-five per cent. at the maximum. Now, it is perfectly plain to economists of this day that, if there is to be protection at all, it is not possible to decide academically on a certain percentage. That seems to be entirely outside the possibilities of the case, since every specific industry should be protected according to foreign competition, involving many elements which cannot be absolutely predicted, and which are supposed to be worked out separately in every bill.

Clay was wroth at Gallatin for making such a proposition, and if he had confined his remarks to the absurdity of supposing that any fixed percentage could be established, there would have been little objectionable. What he did was to make a bitter attack on that gentleman in words which must be reprinted here for the reason that they were to be repudiated so soon:

"And whom do we find some of the principal supporters out of Congress, of this foreign system? (free trade). Mr. President, there are some foreigners who always remain exotics, and never become naturalized in our country; while, happily, there are many others who readily attach themselves to our principles and our institutions. But, sir, the gentleman to whom I am about to allude, although long a resident of this country, has no feelings, no attachments, no sympathies, no principles in common with our people. Nearly fifty years ago Pennsylvania took him to her bosom, and warmed, and cherished, and honored him; and how does he manifest his gratitude? By aiming a vital blow at a system endeared to her by a thorough conviction that it is indispensable to her prosperity. He has filled at home and abroad some of the highest offices under this government during thirty years, and he is still at heart an alien. The authority of his name has been invoked, and the labors of his pen, in the form of a memorial to Congress, have been engaged to overthrow the American system and to substitute the foreign. Go home to your native Europe and there inculcate upon her sovereigns your Utopian doctrines of free trade, and when you have prevailed upon them to unseal their ports and freely admit the produce of Pennsylvania and other States, come back, and we shall be prepared to become converts and to accept your faith."

This was bitter and it was bad. It did no credit to Clay, because it was a species of demagogy to which he seldom stooped, and never without lowering himself and injuring his own cause. It may be that Gallatin was wrong in his theories, but to attack him because of his foreign birth was absurd, since he was a better protectionist than most of the Ameri-

cans,—much better than Clay was the year following. This is simply an example of that temperament which was so volatile, so prone to run riot, and so certain to injure only its owner.

Aside from its personalities, this speech, which lasted several days, was an excellent exposition of the protective system, in many respects an advance on his speeches of 1824. Clay was pleading for a principle which he claimed to be fundamental, and he insisted that it was only possible according to the plan which he had mapped out. In Clay's view, we must become more and more independent, and any return to the old system was simply playing into the hands of the foreigner, and hence the terrors of his wrath which were sent down upon the devoted head of the mild and patriotic Gallatin.

When the bill finally worked its way through both Houses and was brought to Jackson, that astute President was for a time in a quandary. The bill reached him almost exactly as the bill to recharter the National Bank, and he knew that Clay had staked his political fortunes on these two measures. Clay imagined in his heart that if Jackson vetoed either of the bills, it would be that which dealt with the tariff. It did not seem possible that he could veto both, and if any was to fall, it certainly would not be the bank bill, which had passed by such large majorities and which seemed so essential to the existence of the country. In supposing this Clay counted wrongly. Jackson may not have been a man of much learning,—he was undoubtedly too much of a tyrant in many respects,—but he had a shrewder appreciation of the American people than Clay, who boasted of coming up from the soil. In fact, Jackson knew his own interests much better than Clay did his. As a result, the tariff bill was signed and the bank bill vetoed. This may have been

on principle, as Jackson declared. He may really have felt that the bank was a monstrous corporation that was devouring the substance of the nation, corrupting politics, and endangering the safety of the republic. At any rate, in vetoing the measure he used the same arguments and almost the same language which Clay had used in 1810 when working against the recharter of Hamilton's bank as unconstitutional, and which Benton had solemnly repeated in the Senate. The tariff bill saved Pennsylvania and re-elected Jackson. Clay made a poor showing in the contest, though he would not believe until late that he was irretrievably beaten. Here was another weakness in the composition of Clay. He was always too hopeful at the wrong time, and on the occasions when despondency led him into some course of action to mend matters, he always made them worse.

Here ends really the first chapter in the history of American protection. Clay won his bill and lost his election, and then found that he had a threat of civil war staring him in the face. After the elections, when the Senators gathered in December, there were long faces on both sides of the chamber. Calhoun had resigned the Vice-Presidency and had been elected to the Senate to lead the fight for nullification. South Carolina—that wilful daughter of the republic—had taken the bull by the horns. She had called a State Convention, declared the tariff bills of 1828 and 1832 null and void and unenforcible after the first of February (later postponed somewhat), and the Legislature had raised an army, bought supplies, and was prepared to resist the collection of duties, though all the time professing to be a loyal daughter of the nation, and declaring that she was only acting within her rights.

This was an ugly situation for the country to

face, the more because South Carolina had been talking about such action for a long time; had been trying to get other States to go along with her, and claimed that Jefferson and Madison were the authors of the doctrine of nullification. Clay was once more chagrined by defeat, and though his personal loss was bad enough, he was much more distressed at the situation which confronted the nation. He might have left the whole matter to Jackson, and indeed, for a time, it did seem as if the administration should handle the whole subject. In his annual message Jackson referred only briefly to the subject, and came out soon after in a proclamation which thrilled the country. It told Calhoun and the nullifiers that they had not a leg to stand on, that the tariff laws would be executed under any and all circumstances, and invited the erring sister to repent ere it was too late. General Scott went down to look over the fort at Charleston, the navy was placed in readiness, and there is no doubt that civil war would have begun if there had been no compromise. The actual story of the compromise belongs in another chapter; only that portion relating to the tariff, need be considered here.

Protection was the bone over which the Carolinians were contending, and the question before Clay was, whether he would let the matter stand as it was or make a compromise that would save some of the system. The Congressional election of 1832 indicated that, in spite of Jackson's signing the tariff bill, it was possible there would be a large majority for a reduction. Clay affected to believe that there was a large majority for an extreme free-trade measure, which is problematical. He made up his mind to go back on the whole principle of protection as a national measure and look upon it only as a temporary expedient. This is one of the most astounding

incidents in Clay's whole career. If the American system was so dear to him, so vital and so fundamental it would have been much better, one would suppose, to stand by the guns and let time bring the people round to the endorsement of the principle once more, supposing that in any case they would ever give it up. Clay was not made of Roman material. He shifted his ground at once. He talked with some of the manufacturers and held a long consultation with Calhoun, at first through a third party, for they were not on speaking terms. It was agreed that the existing law should be reduced to a twenty-per-cent. basis in ten years; that all duties in excess of twenty per cent. were to be reduced ten per cent. of such excess annually for eight years, and then in two fell swoops reduced to the twenty-per-cent. maximum basis. And this was the Clay who less than a year before had denounced Gallatin as a foe of his country and his adopted State because he had recommended twenty-five per cent. as the maximum!

When the protectionists heard of this, they sent up a wail of distress and started for Washington as fast as stage and post-chaise would carry them. It was too late. The compromise had been agreed upon and they had to go home in disgust, cheered as much as possible by Clay's assurance that he had saved them from absolute ruin, as under other circumstances protection might have been wiped out entirely. This was poor consolation, but the worst was to follow when Clay announced that he thought ten years quite enough to satisfy the needs of the country in the way of protection, and if by that time the manufacturers had not become independent of foreign competition, it would be time to make inquiry, but doubtless the manufacturers would then be satisfied. It was specifically stated in the bill that thereafter (1842) the maximum duties were to be twenty per

cent. Now, of course, no Congress can bind another in such a case as this, but it was supposed to be part of the compromise which was to keep Calhoun from the gallows, South Carolina in the Union, and make everybody happy. As usual in such cases, nobody was pleased, as the South Carolinians were submitted to humiliations which will be discussed in another chapter.

Before ten years came around Clay had repented again. He saw how mistaken he had been in 1833, and he had occasion many times to regret what he did at that time to pacify those who had no intention of being placated. When the Whig administration came in under Harrison, protection was once more a tenet of the party, and had Old Tippecanoe lived a few months, there would have been no difficulty about getting a new law. But when Tyler turned apostate, he vetoed the first tariff bill and then a second, owing to the fact that there was a row over the distribution of the surplus from public land sales. Clay was then party dictator, and would have dearly loved one hour of physical combat with Tyler, the man who had been named as Vice-President because he wept over Clay's defeat for first honors, the man who was now plotting the fall of Clay and the extinction of the Whig party. Most unfortunately, Tyler was in position to do mischief. He professed to be a good protectionist after a sort, and finally signed a bill which contained a provision that land surplus was never to be distributed unless the tariff fell below twenty per cent. This never has happened to this day, and so one measure killed the other, and Tyler was satisfied. It was a fairly good protectionist measure, but it was short-lived. After its passage Clay made his farewell speech and left the Senate, as he supposed, forever, and in due time the Walker tariff was passed ; but by the time Clay

came back to the Senate, in 1850, the subject was not under discussion. Clay made one of his last pleas in the Senate in behalf of a proper tariff for protection, but his words fell on deaf ears. Ten years later his views were carried out.

Clay, as a protectionist, deserves high rank in the history of American economists. Whether or not one believes in his system, it is certain that he was its chief supporter, its chief defender, and he alone of men in Congress had the power of investing such an abstruse and difficult problem with an air of interest. Clay could talk to an enraptured audience on the tariff for three hours at a stretch, while most speakers would have bored their hearers in fifteen minutes. Clay had a fascinating way of making every one of his auditors imagine that each word spoken was directly addressed to him. If he was, perhaps, only the father-in-law of protection, he was a very good one most of the time; though, as we have seen, in 1833 he reversed himself so completely as to almost shake one's faith in human nature, politically speaking. Clay's logic had convinced every one but himself. There were plenty who, in 1832, would rather have seen the whole bill wiped out than surrender, but they were not in position to command votes.

Every modern protectionist speaker has taken his texts from Henry Clay. The abstruse theory has varied somewhat, but not the practical application. Many of the protective rates are to-day far higher than any Clay would have dreamed of proposing, but that does not affect the principle of protection for which he contended, and which has been, to the present day, one of the most bitterly contested policies in our political history.

XVIII

THE COMPROMISER

It is very common to speak of Clay as the Great Pacificator, though the ordinary person has little idea about his work in compromising. Indeed, the title is not entirely correct, for not one of the three great compromises, so called, effected by Clay was destined to become permanent. Clay's idea was that the best way to get rid of a wound was to poultice it, instead of allowing it to kill or cure in the ancient barbaric fashion. His attitude of mind was always that of conciliation towards those who threatened the republic. His belief in the perpetuity of the Union was not as deep as that of Benton. Clay wanted the Union to survive, he knew the dangers which threatened it, and spent the best years of his life trying to accomplish a condition of affairs so that there could be no excuse for secession. But he was not oversanguine, and saw in the rising tide of opposition to slavery not only a menace to the Union, but he sometimes seemed to assume that the whole fault lay with the abolitionists.

Thrice he effected compromises which seemed to him necessary to keep the republic stable,—in 1821, 1833, and 1850. In each case it was the slave power that was propitiated, as against the majority in the popular branch of Congress, and in each case there was much grumbling on both sides because neither was satisfied with the result. Thomas Hart Benton, who was one of the hardest-headed men of his times, said that none of them were compromises except the first, and that was scarcely entitled to the definition.

The Missouri Compromise was the first legislative action in restraint of slavery that originated with the Congress of the Constitution. Under the Confederation, the ordinance of 1787 had been passed, in which slavery was forever prohibited in what are now the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and a portion of Minnesota. This was largely the work of Jefferson, and a majority of Southern men voted for it, though afterwards Webster insisted that it was a Northern measure, opposed by the slave-holders of the South. That ordinance had been reaffirmed by the Congress of the Constitution, and when the Louisiana Purchase was made, there were those who thought it wise to extend the line to the West. As the Ohio River was the dividing line, it seemed to some members of Congress, when Missouri applied for admission as a State, that, as it was all practically north of the mouth of the Ohio, slavery should be prohibited there. There were those who were opposed to the extension of slavery on moral grounds; there were those who believed the institution bad economy, and certain to bring on trouble; and there were at this time, perhaps, more in the North who opposed the spread of slavery simply because they disliked the Southern statesmen, and felt that free soil ought to grow and in time control the country. It was this question of balance or preponderance between slave and free States that brought unnumbered woes upon the American people.

The application of Missouri for admission was proper enough. She was rapidly growing in population, and steamboats seemed likely to increase her prosperity more than that of any other single State. In 1818 she had a large number of slaves, and her constitution provided for slavery. It was Tallmadge, of New York, who offered in the House

a proviso that slavery should not be permitted in the State, though making some rather mild provisions for the emancipation of those already held to bondage. The House agreed to this and the Senate was contrary-minded, so that no action resulted at that session. Clay was Speaker of the House at the time, but seems to have taken very little interest in the matter. When application was made a second time, the result was about the same. The Senate thought no restriction should be made under the circumstances, and even so stern a moralist as John Quincy Adams felt there was no reason why all precedent should be violated in this case. It might have been different if slavery had not already obtained such a strong foothold through those who went from Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, taking their bond-servants with them.

Clay did not take an active hand in the matter until it was seen that there was to be a serious test case made. The slave-holding States were exactly equal to the free, and much of the opposition from the old Federalists was because this would upset that fine adjustment, and when they saw that admission of Missouri seemed probable, they arranged to permit that partition of Massachusetts long contemplated but never before made possible. Maine was permitted to apply for admission as an offset to Missouri. Still, the opposition to slavery extension was so great that it seems likely the admission of Missouri would have been postponed indefinitely, had not Clay secured grand committees of both Houses to consider the matter. The Houses appointed separate committees, and it was seen that there would be friction when Clay secured a joint session, in which each committee acted independently and still there was full conference. It was part of his plan that nothing should be recommended to either House

that did not receive a majority vote in both committees. For some reason, Clay never claimed much credit, until late in life, for this great Missouri Compromise, which was one of the most important acts of his career in Congress. He always affected indifference to it, though it was essentially his own work, and could never have been brought about except through his direct agency and his unfailing tact. The result was the admission of Missouri as a slave State, with the proviso that no other slave States should be erected north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes of north latitude, which was the southern boundary of Missouri. This was a real compromise because it divided up territory in fairly equal proportions, though the slavery advocates considered that they had the worst end of the bargain, as the great Northwest was much more extensive than that made possible for slavery. On the other hand, the Northern people said that a country peopled only by the Indian and the buffalo was not likely very soon to become good soil for any kind of State. And there the matter rested.

In this action Clay made a record that was greater than he thought and more important than he could possibly have estimated, since here was a case where Congress legislated directly on slavery, voting it in and out of Federal territory ; and in this most of the Southern people joined, while the negative votes were largely from the North. This Missouri Compromise soon came to be looked upon as almost as sacred as the Constitution itself, and great was the indignation, over thirty years later, when it was repealed. It is true that later the Supreme Court decided that slavery always had been a national institution and that the Missouri Compromise had been void from the beginning, but that only hastened the opposition, which finally brought on civil war.

One result of this Compromise act was that Benton came to the Senate and became one of Clay's bitterest party foes. Though they were related through Mrs. Clay, and most of the time had warm personal intercourse, there were other times when they would not speak to each other, and in the course of debate they hurled invectives back and forth in a way that was more forcible than dignified. The two men were the exact opposites of each other, and both were strong men. Clay was the brilliant, dashing statesman and the accomplished orator. Benton was the heavy, plodding man who spoke much and, as a rule, badly, but had better ideas of fundamental legislation than Clay. They were to be opposed in nearly every important piece of legislation for the next thirty years, and while Clay was to fight often for the Presidency and be disappointed, Benton was to achieve manifold victories in the Senate as the right arm of Jackson and the foe of the Triumvirate.

The second great compromise came up over the tariff act of 1832, the passage of which has already been narrated. It seemed to Webster and Benton that the time had come to stop the South Carolinian murmuring about reserved rights and violated obligations by giving her a good thrashing, if necessary. Calhoun had been playing a strong game ever since he found that Jackson intended to succeed himself. It seems likely that, if Calhoun had been a man of more tact, he might have made friends with Jackson and become the administration candidate in 1832. Jackson was a feeble old man when first elected. At first he had no intention of taking a second term ; but when he found that Calhoun was plotting against him, was talking nullification and other abstractions, he became disgusted. It was at this moment that some one informed Jackson that it was Calhoun, and not Adams, who, in Monroe's Cabinet, had tried to

have the doughty general censured for his conduct in invading Florida and hanging two British subjects, driving out the Spanish, and acting the buccaneer generally. That settled Calhoun, so far as Jackson was concerned, and the result was that the South Carolinian went to any length to make it warm for Jackson. In the Senate the Triumvirate did much to distress and annoy Jackson, but not to really injure him. In looking around for an issue, Calhoun picked up the tariff, and South Carolina held its convention, passed its writ of nullification, and the Legislature prepared for active resistance to the collection of customs duties after the first of February, as already narrated. In setting up in business for herself, the saucy Commonwealth acted with all the dignity and decorum of international law, so far as words were concerned, but in action she was not willing for the moment to go further than make threats.

In December, 1832, Clay came to the Senate chastened by defeat and mentally disturbed by the South Carolina situation. He was no believer in nullification or secession, but he was of a cast of mind that made him constantly take counsel of his fears. It was strange that he should believe the Union threatened by the action of one of the smallest of the States, that he should not have counselled first obedience to a law which he had placed on the statute-books, and later have discussed the question of a change. In sooth, he found that the country was not for Clay, and he was willing to do his best to make an accommodation. Clay was not a timid man in the sense that he feared any man living, but he seems always to have been willing to retreat from any position he had taken when there was strenuous opposition. He really feared that the South Carolina precedent might spread and there would come

a division of the republic. In consequence, he felt it his duty to give up something for security, especially as the elections had gone against him in Congress, as well as on the head of the ticket, and there was the likely chance that the next Congress would pass a low tariff bill. Whether or not this would have been done is problematical. It may well be assumed that Congress would have been chary about doing anything of the sort if the leaders had held out against rebellious South Carolina. It was no time to pet and beg that State, but to explain to her where she stood. This was the view of some of the leaders ; but Clay, to his subsequent regret, concluded that the best thing to do was to compromise.

Jackson was doing a good deal of talking. There were threats of trying Calhoun and his "crowd" for high treason, and hanging them on a gallows more lofty than that of Haman. It is not likely it would ever have come to such a pitch, but we can well believe that Jackson would have done all that man could do, and he might have been more willing to hang Calhoun than Ambrister, the Briton whom he executed in Florida. Calhoun was getting restive because he found none of the Southern people was coming to the aid of his State. When he started his long talks about the Constitution and his fine-spun theories of the nature of government he was received with disgust. Most of the legislators were practical men, and they knew that here was a case of having the laws obeyed or submitting to anarchy.

" It's a pity to see those South Carolinians hanged ; they are such fine fellows," remarked Clayton, of Delaware, to Clay. Together they resolved on a compromise. We have seen how Clay had handled the manufacturers, but he left much of the details of the compromise to Clayton. Webster was not consulted, because it was early seen that he was for

war rather than any compromise. Calhoun was approached and a meeting with Clay arranged, which is described as having been very frosty and constrained. Out of this grew the compromise which has been noted, by which the tariff was to be gradually reduced for eight years and then in two years cut down to the basis of 1816. After a good deal of consideration, Calhoun agreed to the proposition because he saw that a war would be ridiculous. General Winfield Scott was a Virginian, but he would have overrun South Carolina on a moment's notice.

When the general agreement of a compromise had been made, it seemed rather ridiculous on its face, since twenty per cent. was protective in theory and somewhat in practice, and it was against the whole subject of protection that Calhoun fought. He was willing to concede something for peace, when he was brought up with a round turn by Clay and Clayton. The nullifiers were told in plain words that they must vote for the bill in all its stages and on final passage, and that, in order that there might never be any statement made that protection was unconstitutional, one schedule was advanced to about sixty per cent., the highest rate on textiles that had ever been levied. At this Calhoun balked. He would not object to the passage of the bill, but to compel him to vote for it was not only gall and wormwood, but a complete violation of his alleged principles. Clayton acted as principal manager for Clay, and told him that, as the session was getting late, there was no time to hesitate. Indeed, many of those who at first favored the compromise now began to wish that it had never been suggested, and rather hoped that South Carolina would put her boasts to a test. Calhoun spent one long night pacing the floor, and finding there was no chance to evade the terms of the compromise, he cast his vote for it as he had agreed.

Clay had made up his mind, however, that there should be a better law for the collection of revenue and protection of the President. There was an ancient statute, passed in the time of the Fries rebellion, but it was inadequate. Hand in hand with the reduction of the tariff bill went the passage of a bill that gave the President all the power he could wish to swoop down on offenders and put a stop to all grumbling very summarily. This was a part of the compromise, and it passed without trouble. The third feature was one that was very dear to Clay. The national debt was now practically paid, and the sales of lands were increasing at an enormous rate. The sop which Clay held out to the States to vote for the new tariff was the passage of a bill to divide this surplus among the States. We shall hear more of this subject later; but this was a measure which Clay had tried in vain to have passed in the previous session, as an aid to his canvass. Now he got it through, as most of the States were either in debt or anxious to embark in a career of building canals, railways, and other public improvements.

When Jackson got the three bills, he signed the first two. It so happened that it was within a day or two of adjournment, and he simply took no action on the land bill. He dared not veto it, for fear of being overridden, and he would not sign it. This was the first pocket veto in our history, and Clay was so wroth that at the next meeting of the Senate he made a long speech, asserting that the President had acted in an arbitrary and unconstitutional manner. In truth, he was wrong. Congress had now just begun delaying important business until the last few days. Benton pointed out that the Constitution evidently intended that the President should have ten days to contemplate any bill, and the fault

was with Congress for not acting more promptly. All Clay could do was to smother his wrath.

He had other reasons for feeling angry. The Calhoun tribe, that had been driven into submission and had appeared very meek at the time of the passage of the compromise acts, had gone home and claimed a great victory, and not without some apparent reason. They had boasted that they had compelled a reduction of the tariff rates about one-half, and that they had forced Congress and the President to retreat from their position. This was specious, for there was surrender on both sides; but the more the South Carolinians pondered over the matter the more it seemed to them that victory was entirely on their side, and that they really had been too lenient. When Calhoun came back to the Senate he was arrogant, and so disgusted Clay that he had frequent occasion to say that it was not for this that he had been willing to sacrifice protection, and often he lamented that he had not let Calhoun and Jackson fight it out and "the devil take the hindmost."

If this can be called a compromise, it bore bitter fruit. It did not satisfy the radical Southern people a whit, rather, in time, did it make them more arrogant, more boastful, and more domineering. If there had been no compromise in 1833, there probably would have been none in 1850. Jackson was better able to fight than some of his successors. It is certain that either in 1833 or 1850, at the first overt act of secession, a Southern President and a slave-holder would have led his troops to the scene of resistance. That is the sort of lesson that we may think now ought to have been taught early. It is easy to say that all things are arranged by Providence, and that it was part of a plan to let the war come when it did, but there were a

good many times during the Civil War when it seemed as if Providence were on the other side, and Clay's name was execrated for having allowed the situation to develop as it did. Conversely, it is not at all unlikely that there would have been no Union to save in 1861, had not Clay nursed it so long and so well.

All such speculation is useless. Clay loved the Union and did his best to save it, according to his own lights. Had he been cast in a sterner mould, he might have acted differently. We know, as a matter of fact, that he did preserve the Union so long as he lived, or at least he saw to it that there was no cause of offence, in legislation over which he had control, that would lead any erring sister to try and set up business on her own account.

The so-called compromises of 1850 were improperly named. They were so vital, and came at such an extraordinary time in Clay's career, that a discussion of them in detail is reserved for a separate chapter. It can be said, however, that in this instance also Clay was animated by the same motives, that of removing any cause of offence, and of taking slavery and all its works as far out of politics as possible. It was a beloved theory of some statesmen of that age that there were certain things which were clearly in the domain of politics and others which were not. It is true that each man had a different notion of what things should be taken out of politics, but they all seemed to feel that there were some very close to the life of the people which were to be ignored. Clay said slavery ought to have no place in politics, and yet it appeared at every turn, and in time came to dominate all political thought and action. Clay recognized this, but tried to get rid of it by making certain concessions. Benton declared that there was nothing in the slavery

question to be afraid of, and wanted it ignored. Calhoun said that slavery was a national institution over which Congress had no control whatever, though his entire Senatorial and administrative career was exactly to the contrary.

The appearance of Clay in the Senate in 1850 was at the call of duty. It was a sacrifice of his comfort, and practically of his life, as he well knew. It need only be stated here that the compromise bill which Clay fixed up to heal the "five bleeding wounds of the republic" was the most extraordinary combination of irrelevant and antipodal things that was ever attempted, and the bill failed, in spite of the fact that there was a majority, differently composed, for every one of the principal contentions of it, and these were later passed separately. These were real bleeding wounds, and they were not to be healed by such thin plasters. The compromises suited no one, and although both sides professed themselves satisfied, neither let them alone, and in the end slavery was fought out in the field. These compromises were wretched attempts to deceive both sides. In the North and the South there were, by 1850, plenty of men who were willing to fight, and cared for nothing so long as they might sustain their contentions. There was no compromise, simply a brief cessation of hostilities, and in the end the legislation became useless.

Clay's voice, which was for conciliation at all times, was lacking in that stern and essential element of discipline. Instead of demanding, first, obedience, and then conceding something for the sake of general amity, he bargained beforehand, and was himself obliged to admit that in nearly every case there was a failure to keep the compact. These efforts of Clay are more a tribute to his heart than his head. We may believe that they

were, in his view, essential to the perpetuity of the republic. Perhaps they were, though even in his own analysis they were unsatisfactory and in this day they seem futile. All government is based on compromise, and if to Clay belongs the title of the Great Pacificator, it is really not so much because of the few measures which he fathered at critical times, but because he was at all times a man whose lofty spirit and magnanimous soul sought to calm the passions of the hour, and by most solemn appeals to patriotism to prevent the rise or development of those ideas which in the end must have proved destructive.

Clay's career as a friend of the Union is one that needs no demonstration. Even in the times he lived, when his enemies were legion, and when in the House or Senate there were those who would go to any length to defeat him, he never lacked friends, and was sought, not only in public, but many times in private to compose those difficulties which others had found irreconcilable. There was a winsomeness, a womanly charm at such times about Clay, which bore down all opposition. His temperament was so variable and his variety of charm so wonderful that he was, of all men living, the one best able to act as a physician to the country, if such was needed. Yet he was denied the sole thing he asked of the country he served so much. His tendency to make peace with his enemies, to hesitate and modify his opinions, became in time a fixed habit ; and such is the constitution of human nature that the people preferred the arbitrary, imperious Jackson, or the foxy Buchanan, or the unknown Polk to one who was the most singularly endowed statesman this country has ever known, and one who, perhaps, would never have added to his laurels had he been granted that boon which he sought so often and in vain.

XIX

THE TRIUMVIRATE

Clay, Webster, and Calhoun are names so closely linked together in political history that many persons assume that there existed among the members of the so-called Triumvirate the closest intimacy. In fact, this was never the case. The men were antagonistic in temperament, political principles, and general views of life. Clay was addicted to gay living, was fond of the society of women, and never shone to better advantage than when surrounded by a bevy of beauties, young and old. He could fascinate like a Don Juan, but none of the miserable libels told of him has any connection with his social life in Washington. A New England Senator, writing home in 1806, spoke of Clay's exceeding popularity in society and the easy way in which he took life, reading little, going out much, and enjoying all the good things which came in his path. This was only less than the truth.

Calhoun was austere in his habits. Only one man exceeded him in rectitude, and that was Benton, who neither drank liquors, used tobacco, nor gambled in an age when these were not esteemed vices. Calhoun, in early life, was one of the most promising of American statesmen. He had grown up in a sort of cloister, and had little touch with life until he came to Congress as a young man ; but he was well read, and intellectually had the greatest capacity of any man of his time, unless it be his two associates. In his younger years he was ardent, optimistic, and ambitious. He might, under other

circumstances, have become one of the most serviceable of statesman, as he was one of the most prominent. But after he had fought against Jackson and lost, the iron entered his soul, and he became narrow. He withdrew more and more into his shell, and the only themes which seemed to interest him were cotton and slavery. Disappointed ambition left him bitter, while it seemed to sweeten Clay. Calhoun was a better man than most people in these days are apt to think. He was dangerous and at times malicious, though at heart professedly patriotic; and such is the curious composition of the human mind, that it may be said that he really was patriotic. If Calhoun had been blessed with a wife and children, the history of the country might have been very different.

Among the stories which found their way into the newspapers of the day, there was one to the effect that a sort of council was held every night, in which these three great men met and discussed how they might overthrow their enemies. The truth is, at these alleged moments, the men were usually far apart and probably breathing out threats against the others. On one occasion Clay is related to have left his cloak behind, and when he found Calhoun wearing it, would not claim it, refused to accept the substitute, and bought a new one rather than be contaminated. The story goes on to say that in a few weeks he exchanged cloaks with Calhoun, who was not in the least mollified. Calhoun generally wore a shawl.

Webster was in some respects the ablest and in others the weakest of the three. Nature has seldom endowed a man with such wealth of intellect, such wonderful powers of logic, such a magnificent voice, and such a godlike presence. Morally he had his defects. He drank heavily, and in later years is said to have consumed a quart of brandy every day.

He was careless in money matters, and always in debt, although his fees were the greatest known in our history at the time. He also was constantly devoured by the canker-worm of ambition. He was embittered by constant defeat, and this was the more galling to him because at no time was he ever in measurable distance of the Presidency he so ardently desired. He was conscious of his own powers, and while seeking constantly that promotion which lesser men achieved, he never obtained the hold on any considerable share of that confidence among the people which Clay enjoyed throughout the whole country and Calhoun in a portion of the South.

Webster was once asked why he did not have more enthusiasm for Clay. He replied that neither God nor nature had given him much sentiment, but that he had always believed that if Henry Clay had been a woman, and he (Webster) had met her in early life, they would have loved, quarrelled, and married, and probably quarrelled afterwards; but he could not conceive how he might, in any case, have regretted the event. Considering that the two men were for many years bitterly opposed to each other, this is a fine tribute to Clay. It seems certain that in their near relations to each other the men failed to understand individual greatness. It was only when separated that they appeared to feel that there was something lacking.

Calhoun once said, "I don't like Clay. He is a bad man, an impostor, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but, by God! I love him."

This story, even if apocryphal, is very near the truth.

These were the three giant intellects who strove against one another for the prize and always in vain. To serve their own purposes, there were times when

they acted in concert, though not on speaking terms. It is one of the pitiable things in history that they should have lacked that perfect balance which their qualities would have made possible, if it had not been for certain notable defects. There were few occasions when they could have been overthrown; and yet such opportunities did occur, as when, during Jackson's last term, Benton fought almost single-handed against the three, and managed to secure the expunging of the resolution of censure passed against Jackson in the heat of passion growing out of the National Bank affair.

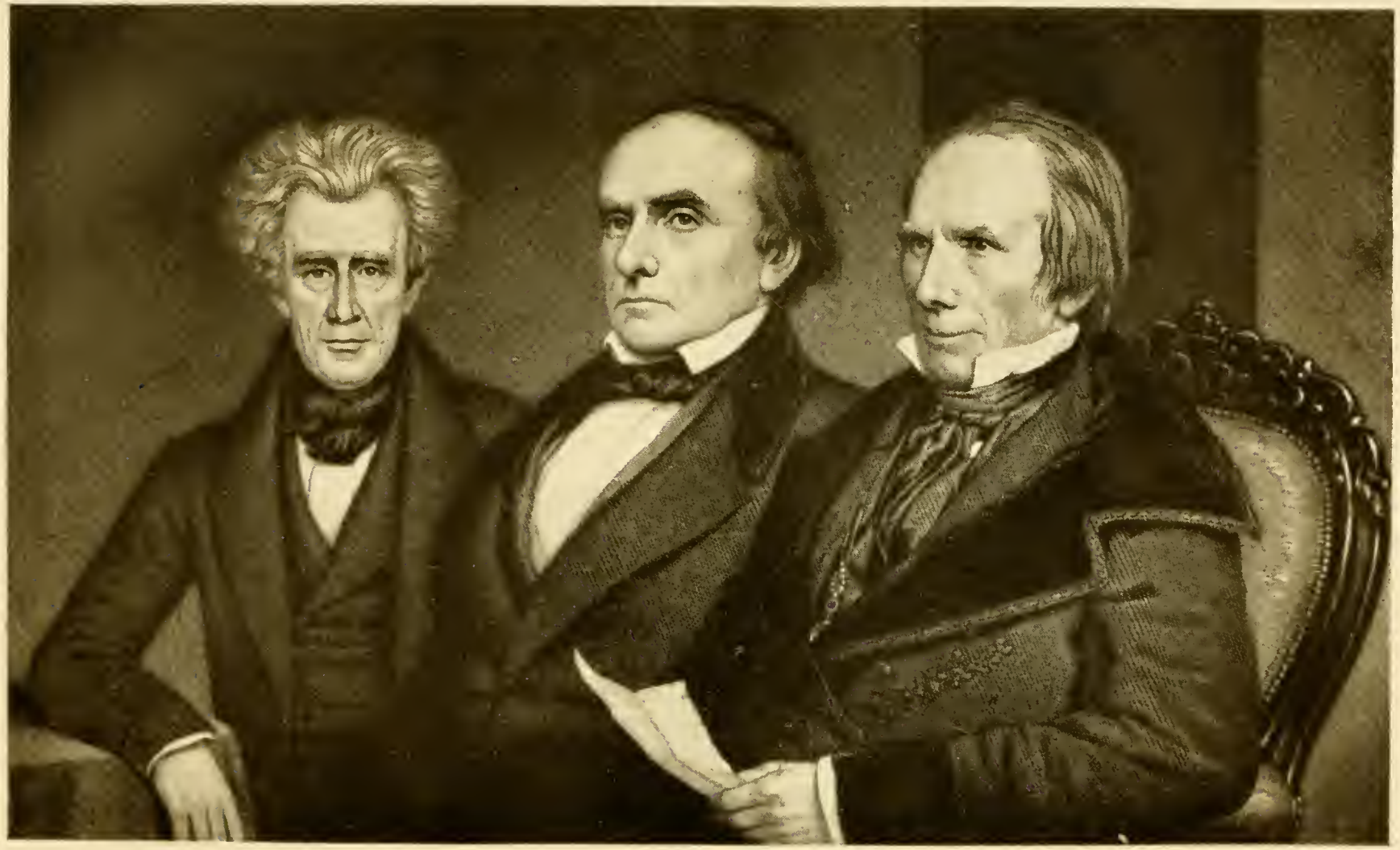
Of the Triumvirate, Clay was in most respects the leader. He was by far the ablest as a constructive statesman. Many pages of statutes can be found which Clay personally drew up, and many more which he devised and originated for others to father. There is scarcely a line on the statute-books written by Webster and very few by Calhoun. While Clay was trying to make his place in history and obtain the Presidency by securing the passage of laws which were of the greatest moment, Calhoun was endeavoring to dominate the Union by his views upon the nature of slavery and the paramount importance of cotton. Most of us live in the region of our affections or passions, under the influence of local interests. Webster, in his debates with Hayne, established the Union in a sense which had never before obtained. If all that he has said or done were to perish, except his peroration in his last reply to Hayne, his fame would be imperishable. That short apostrophe of the Union was a tower of strength to the country in the Civil War, and it is sad to note that in his old age he descended from the lofty position of his best days.

Clay, however, stands as the man who achieved most, even if not always permanent. The relations of

the three men began when they were in the House in 1816. They stood shoulder to shoulder in many of the measures that were passed to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the country due to the second war with Great Britain; yet it is a curious fact, as already related, that at this time the two Southern slave-holders were protectionists and liberal constructionists, while Webster was a free-trader, though his own State needed protection most. For some years after this their lines were far apart. It was not until the Jackson administration that the alliance was made, which was offensive rather than defensive. By this time Calhoun was a disappointed candidate for the Presidency; Clay had been defeated once, but had high hopes; while Webster was ambitious, but not yet a candidate.

The three men hated one another in the sense that they were rivals. They were, perhaps, the three greatest intellects the country has produced, and all their rivalries resulted only in general disappointment. They found it satisfactory to combine against Jackson, postponing individual fights until they had slain Old Hickory,—an event that never occurred. They stood together to prevent the legislation he wanted, to pass that which they knew he did not relish, to defeat his nominees, and to make trouble generally. Unfortunately for their schemes, there never was a man who seemed to thrive under opposition as did Andrew Jackson. That statesman has many black marks to his credit, yet such was his personality, such his shrewdness, and such his common sense that he was enabled to defeat the Triumvirate in their larger plans.

There is a story that in 1849 or early in 1850, Clay, Calhoun, and Webster met at dinner and agreed on the compromise resolutions which were eventually enacted into legislation. This meeting



JACKSON, WEBSTER, AND CLAY

(This is one of the most interesting groups in American portraiture. It is a copy of a steel engraving by John Sartain, from a print in possession of Hon. Hampton L. Carson, of Philadelphia. Internal evidence is that Sartain intended a portrait of The Triumvirate, and by mistake used a portrait of Jackson instead of Calhoun.)

never took place. At the time Clay and Calhoun were invalids and Webster was nursing his wrath. The three were not friendly, except in a defensive sense. That they should politically agree would have been a miracle, that they could be on friendly terms impossible, considering the past and the present and the views which each held for the future.

It is reported that Clay once said, "If that d—d raven from South Carolina keeps quiet, I can do something." And it is said that Calhoun, on the same occasion, remarked that he could send the United States to perdition, if it were not for that Kentucky hell-fiend. When asked whom he meant, Calhoun replied that he referred to his best friend and greatest enemy,—that sterling patriot, Henry Clay. This led some people to think that Calhoun was mad.

These stories are doubtless apocryphal for, when Calhoun died, Clay was one of his warmest eulogists.

It seemed expedient to Clay, Webster, and Calhoun that Van Buren be put out of politics. He had resigned the Secretaryship of State when the combination of the Calhoun forces and the Peggy Eaton incident made it essential for Jackson to reconstruct his Cabinet. Jackson had defied all precedent and, it seemed to the Triumvirate, was guiding the ship of state on the rocks. Up to that time the members of the Cabinet of every President had been men of the very highest ability and of political strength at home. The Cabinet, though not expressly recognized in the Constitution, had grown into a powerful body of advisers, without whose counsel the President seldom acted. It was Jackson who put a lot of second-rate men in the Cabinet and then made clerks of them, leaving the real consultations to what was known as his "Kitchen

Cabinet," which was composed of shrewd men without any political or official status. The result was not entirely happy, but it was not as disastrous as Clay had expected.

Van Buren, in his day, was considered to be shrewd, and the title of "The Little Magician" was given him because he managed to handle men with great facility and was extraordinarily successful in politics. He and Clay were destined to be political enemies for many years, but there was a strong affection between them. Indeed, there was hardly a man in Washington for whom Clay had so much and such continuous regard. He took no part in the Peggy Eaton issue, as he considered it outside his sphere; but all of the Triumvirate were glad when it broke up the Cabinet, regarding it as grist for their mill. As Clay was a candidate for the succession, he viewed with complacency anything that would weaken Jackson. It is said of Van Buren that he told Peggy, with strict injunctions never to repeat it, that he considered Jackson the greatest statesman the country had ever known. Of course, this, as was intended, soon came to Jackson's ears, who declared that Van Buren was a man after his own heart. When Van Buren left the Cabinet, to make peace in the political family, Jackson sent him as minister to Great Britain. This was during vacation, and when the nomination was sent to the Senate, the Triumvirate considered that the best way to get rid of Jackson and Van Buren was to withhold confirmation of the nomination.

Up to that time there had never been a rejection, except on grave grounds, and, to keep the record clear, some very serious charges were brought against Van Buren touching his career as Secretary of State, his attitude towards the spoils system, and

towards the West Indian trade matter,—all of which, were of course, subterfuges. They were, in fact, part of the game of politics as played at the time, and they failed to satisfy the people. There is no doubt that Clay had a perfect right to fight Jackson in the same way in which that old soldier had made war on him and his followers. The regrettable part of the warfare on Clay's part was that it did not succeed.

During the debate there arose the controversy over the right of the party in power to control offices, and Marcy, of New York, announced the principle so often erroneously attributed to Jackson, that in his State they saw no objection to the principle in politics that "to the victors belong the spoils." For his own part, Clay was no believer in changes for political reasons. He rightly considered political patronage as no party or personal perquisite.

The opposition was led by Benton, who had a hard time of it. The Triumvirate controlled a good majority of the Senate. The debate was long and a good deal of spleen was shown. Clay's most important speech on the subject was not long, but bitter. One would suppose, after reading it, that Van Buren was so destitute of all principle that no decent man would associate with him. Indeed, the followers of Clay were so strong in this belief that later they were amazed and angered to find that Clay was not only on good terms with Van Buren, but entertained him royally at Ashland.

Early in his second term Jackson removed the deposits from the National Bank, discharging Duane, his Secretary of the Treasury, to secure in Taney a man who would obey orders. The Triumvirate lay in wait for Taney. He was the man who had made the trouble, and they determined to keep him out of office. According to the law, the President was

not obliged to send in nominations until near the end of the session. When Taney's came in, it was promptly rejected with the nominations of many others. But the rejection failed of its purpose. Chief-Justice Marshall died, and Taney was appointed his successor and confirmed.

In the tariff compromise Webster did not join with his two associates. When Harrison became President, Webster was made Secretary of State after Clay had declined the place and had refused to allow Webster to become Secretary of the Treasury. When Tyler succeeded and went into apostasy, all of the Cabinet resigned except Webster. He denied that there was any reason for the conduct of his associates, though if ever there was a time when a man ought to have had some sense of the eternal fitness of things in politics, this was the occasion. Notwithstanding, Webster defended his position on the ground that he wanted to complete negotiations for the Northwestern boundary. He soon found it desirable and necessary, however, to get out before he was kicked out, and he left the Cabinet a disappointed man. Clay was disgusted with him, but Webster cared very little for that until later; then there was a friendly feeling between the two men for some time. Clay left the Senate to go home and run for the Presidency, deeming it bad policy to stay in office, and the Triumvirate did not meet again until 1849, when they once more joined in the great effort to compromise all the differences that existed between the two sections of the country.

Even then the alliance was hollow. All were old men and none of them without ambitions. Webster still hoped to be President, Clay was not sure that at seventy-four he was too old, while Calhoun went to his grave before matters came to a focus. Such was the end of the Triumvirate which accomplished

much more negatively than positively. The nation has seldom had such servants as the three who composed it, and it is a pity that their interests were not more closely allied. It is interesting to learn that Randolph was responsible as much as any man for the course which Calhoun eventually took,—a course which had many disastrous consequences.

Randolph stands out as one of the most remarkable characters in our history. There is no doubt that at times he was practically insane. He lived in constant dread of insanity, and his best friends believed that he was often irresponsible. He would come into the Senate spurred and booted, with his dogs and whip in hand, and make the most offensive remarks, apparently only to cause a sensation. He and Clay came into frequent conflict while both were members of the House, and finally, when stung to the quick by a remark which Randolph made concerning his origin, Clay made the statement:

"Sir, I am growing old. I have had some little measure of experience in public life, and the result of that experience has brought me to this conclusion, that when business, of whatever nature, is to be transacted in a deliberative assembly or in private life, courtesy, forbearance, and moderation are best calculated to bring it to a successful conclusion. Sir, my age admonishes me to abstain from involving myself in personal difficulties; would to God that I could say I am also restrained by higher motives. I certainly never sought any collision with the gentleman from Virginia. My situation at this time is peculiar, if it be nothing else, and might, I should think, dissuade, at least, a generous heart from any wish to draw me into circumstances of personal altercation. I have experienced this magnanimity from some quarters of the House; but I regret, that from others it appears to have no such consideration. The gentleman from Virginia was pleased to say, that in one point, at least, he coincided with me,—in an humble estimate of my grammatical and philological acquirements. I know my deficiencies. I was born to no proud patrimonial estate; from my father I inherited only infancy, ignorance, and indigence. I feel my defects; but, so far as

my situation in early life is concerned, I may, without presumption, say they are more my misfortune than my fault."

At this time Clay was only forty-seven years old, and really on the threshold of his greater career. He had about as good a chance in life as any one of his time, and his statement must he taken rhetorically rather than as truth in detail.

In 1834 the Triumvirate secured the passage of a resolution of censure upon Jackson for removing the deposits from the National Bank. This was all that it could accomplish, in view of the damage already done; and though in a sense it was mere *brutem fulmen*, it caused Jackson intense annoyance, all the more because no such action had ever before been taken. It seemed to give the Triumvirate intense joy. The resolution was not passed until after a great deal of discussion and after the original had been greatly modified. It recited that Jackson had acted in a way not supported by the Constitution and in a manner dangerous to the liberties of the people. If the resolution was correct, Jackson was a tyrant and deserved impeachment. The resolution itself had no effect, but it was a stain on Jackson's record which worried him more than the fact that he had hanged without trial two British subjects, and had invaded a foreign soil and driven out the garrison of a friendly power. Benton at once assumed the championship of Jackson, and at every session introduced a resolution to expunge the resolution of censure.

When Jackson received the original resolution he was highly indignant, and sent to the Senate a protest which it refused to receive. There is no doubt that the Senate acted entirely within its rights in so doing, as it probably had the right to express an opinion on any subject; but in making this war on

Jackson the Triumvirate was actuated by motives not entirely patriotic. Calhoun was burning with rage over his elimination from the successorship. Clay was angry that he had been defeated so decisively before the people, especially as the campaign was conducted on party lines, and his own policies had been reversed. Webster had no use for the man of iron who so ruthlessly executed his own wishes and carried the country with him. At this time, indeed, Clay and Calhoun were bitter enemies; Calhoun, in his masterful way, was lording it over Clay, telling every one that there was no compromise, that Clay had been obliged to bow the knee to the South Carolinians, and that, under other circumstances, the Palmetto State would have made good her threat.

To a man of Clay's temperament this was maddening. He had gone to the very limit in giving up protection for the sake of the Union, and he had actually forced Calhoun to vote for the compromise. For this he had been execrated by leading members of his party, had become estranged from Webster, and had been rejected as the candidate of his party for the succession in 1836. Clay, who was reluctant to run in 1832, seems to have had a notion that he could beat Van Buren in 1836, though there is no reason to believe that he could have done so. All this time Benton was working for a mutilation of the records, as Clay called it, so as to remove the censure from Jackson, and in this he displayed a persistency worthy of a better cause, though in the end it brought success. The Jackson machine was in good condition. Whenever Benton found a man whom Clay had seduced into thinking Jackson a monster, he began work on the State Legislature until it passed a resolution instructing the Senators to vote for the expunging resolution. In many instances this was accomplished. In some instances the Senators

resigned rather than comply with the instruction, the right of which was then well recognized, but it has since fallen into complete disuse. Tyler, of Virginia, stuck to Clay, and resigned rather than comply. Hugh L. White did the same.

White was a Senator from Tennessee, and one of the country's ablest men. He had a constant aversion to public office, and there was no gift in the possession of Tennessee that was not offered him, and which the people did not think it was an honor to them to have him accept. In late years he married a buxom widow who had kept a boarding-house at the capital for years and was anxious to become mistress of the White House. White was by nature indolent or indifferent to ambition, but his wife stimulated him so that he made the race only to be disastrously defeated and to die, as many believed, of chagrin.

By the time Jackson was in the last months of his campaign, Benton could count up a majority for his expunging resolution, and in January, 1837, he collected a Spartan band that was willing to stand by him until the end. Benton, therefore, served notice on Clay that there would be no adjournment until the resolution was passed.

At first, Clay and his two colleagues affected to ignore the threat; but when they saw a wagon-load of hams and sandwiches, turkeys, chickens, salads, and a lot of wines going into a committee-room, their hearts sank within them. Benton had marshalled his forces to good advantage, and, believing that there was basis for the threats against his life by rowdies, he went about with caution. His wife, fearing that his days were numbered, sat with him on the floor of the Senate, and friends kept arms in a convenient committee-room to use upon the galleries, which were supposed to be packed with friends

of the bank and the Triumvirate. Of course, no one in authority had any connection with the mob which assembled on the first indication that there was to be trouble; but, while there was no actual violence, there was some disturbance in the galleries, and Benton's friends felt it necessary to form a sort of Pretorian guard around him, while he forced the resolution through.

Seeing that the resolution must pass, the members of the Triumvirate consoled themselves by putting themselves on record for the last time against what they considered a usurpation of the power of the Senate to undo what it had once performed. Their arguments seem to have had a good deal more spleen than logic. If there was any reason why a majority of the Senate at one time should use its power to censure a President, there was obviously no reason why, later, another Senate should not use such a method as it chose to express its confidence in the Executive. In both cases the action of the Senate was undignified, unnecessary, and productive of no particular good. Each of the Triumvirate made an impassioned speech which showed the anguish of despair. Clay once more seemed to feel that the end of the republic was at hand. He explained his views on the subject of Jackson's removal of the Secretary of the Treasury in order to get a pliant man, denounced Old Hickory in unsparing invective, and closed in this pessimistic strain:

"But why should I detain the Senate or needlessly waste my breath in fruitless exertions? The decree has gone forth. It is one of urgency, too. The deed is to be done; that foul deed, like the blood-stained hand of the guilty Macbeth, all ocean's water will never wash out. Proceed, then, to the noble work which lies before you, and, like other skilful executioners, do it quickly. And when you have perpetrated it, go home to the people and tell them what glorious honors you have achieved for our common country. Tell them that

you have extinguished one of the brightest and purest lights that ever burned at the altar of civil liberty. Tell them that you have silenced one of the noblest batteries that ever thundered in defence of the Constitution, and bravely spiked the cannon. Tell them that, henceforth, no matter what daring and outrageous act any President may perform, you have forever hermetically sealed the mouth of the Senate. Tell them that he may fearlessly assume what power he pleases; snatch from its lawful custody the public purse, command the military detachment to enter the halls of the Capitol, overawe Congress, trample down the Constitution, and raze every bulwark of freedom, but that the Senate must stand mute in silent submission and not dare to raise its opposing voice. That it must wait until the House of Representatives, humbled and subdued like itself, and a majority of it composed of the partisans of the President, shall prefer articles of impeachment. Tell them that finally you have restored the glorious doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; and if the people do not pour out their indignation and imprecations, I have yet to learn the character of American freemen."

Alas! for Clay himself had not learned and never fully learned the character of American freemen. In four separate national elections Jackson came out at the head of the poll, either in his own person or that of Van Buren, his creature.

The resolution was passed, and at midnight the Secretary of the Senate, by direction, drew black lines around the original resolution of censure and across its face wrote the fact that it had been expunged. A disturbance in the galleries nearly led to a riot, but order was restored without difficulty, and Benton went home triumphant. Next day Jackson spread a table for the expungers and their wives, in the presence of his enemies, and a gay time was enjoyed, while the members of the Triumvirate were nursing their wounds and sharpening their knives. But never did the iron pierce Jackson's skin, much to their disgust. Probably Jackson had as many failings as any man who ever sat in the Presidential chair; it may be that many of his poli-

cies were either for the moment or entirely improper; yet the three great intellects which seemed to combine in themselves nearly all the talent of America could prevail against him only in minor matters, and these affected the old Indian fighter little. In the end he rode down every one of his opponents and left them bleeding upon the field.

That Clay was entirely moved by his notions of justice in the manner in which he fought Jackson as a man and a President may be assumed. That he failed to perceive the strength of the older man's position, and that he frequently put himself strategically in a worse position than he did Jackson, were probably due to the fact that he (Clay), after all, was a gentleman of the old school, in spite of all his talk about youthful poverty and lack of advantages. Almost all of the cultured and the wise and the educated were against Jackson, and it was exasperating to them to see the rude frontiersman accomplish his purposes, backed by American democracy, while the elect were passed over. For good or ill, Jackson did represent the American people, as was plainly demonstrated many times. It was a crude and untaught democracy, perhaps, but it was honest, and it liked the man of action rather than those who spun theories or who attempted to erect corporate power as a national agency.

Jackson had very few theories, but he knew that in the Seminole matter, Clay while Speaker of the House, had attacked him in a bitter speech which seems to have been entirely deserved, and that Calhoun, as Secretary of War, was proposing to discipline him when the intervention of John Quincy Adams saved him. For these two men Jackson had nothing but bitter hatred all his days. Unlike them, he could neither forgive nor forget. But, curiously enough, he always had a high regard for Webster

because that statesman had refused to bow to Calhoun, had smitten him hip and thigh, and had come out in defence of the Union at a time when Jackson was talking from the White House with more threats than he feared he would be able to make good.

It is hard to give a clear understanding of the impression this speech of Clay's produced. If a man should go into the gallery of the Senate now and cry treason against any member, there would be trouble. But it so happened that then there were many things which had led men to call the government and the President all sorts of names, and it is said that the friends of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster were packed in the galleries, that they were instructed to make a noise at the proper time, and, if possible, to prevent a vote. It is very difficult to believe these stories, and there is no corroborative evidence of them. Jackson had raised the mob into prominence and had used it to good advantage. The mob is seldom partial, and if it be true, as alleged, that there were in the gallery that night some of the men who would have been glad to make trouble for Jackson, it is not surprising; but there is no evidence that such is the fact.

Clay, it is said, went to the Senate that day clad in black because he knew that the end was coming. It is even said that he refused to accept snuff of a Democratic friend who was in favor of expunging. There is current a report that he sent some of his friends to Benton's committee-room to learn the progress of events, and that they tarried so long over the chickens and the wine, especially the wine, that Clay, who never took wine on such occasions, was incensed and made unpleasant remarks, in which he quoted Horace incorrectly.

An amusing altercation occurred when the man

who had made the trouble in the gallery was brought to the bar of the Senate. Benton, who had raised the stir, had no desire to make the man suffer; but when the prisoner insisted on explanations, Benton thought he detected in his demeanor something of Clay's inspiration. The result was that the man was released, and when Clay and Benton were once outside the Capitol they had an encounter, in which Benton came off the winner. It is reported that after this altercation, almost unprecedented in its bitterness, Benton insisted on seeing Clay home, and, refusing an invitation to cards, had the satisfaction of seeing Clay go to bed at the comparatively early hour of three o'clock in the morning.

In later days the opposing members would have left the Senate chamber, but it is related that on this occasion all of them remained until the last act was performed. To Clay this was gall and wormwood. He had not only introduced the original resolution, but he had in many speeches attacked Jackson in a way that was only a shade less than unparliamentary. When it was all over, he walked home without his hat, and when he arrived at his lodgings, sent his faithful Charles after it, who returned with one that was not large enough by several sizes. Clay remarked that some one had a swelled head that night, but he thanked God that he was not the one, and went to sleep. Next day he recovered his hat, which was a valuable beaver, and had an exchange of wit with the man who carried it off. On that morning Clay appeared in the Senate as imperturbable as if nothing had happened. He gravely rebuked Benton for an alleged slight parliamentary offence, which the Missouri man accepted with politeness, and the incident was considered closed.

In the illustrations of this volume will be found a

copy of a rare engraving by Sartain of Clay, Webster, and Jackson in one group, and there is internal evidence to show that in this picture Sartain contemplated an engraving of the Triumvirate. As Jackson and Calhoun resembled each other to a remarkable degree, it seems likely, however, that by mistake the artist used Jackson's portrait instead of that of Calhoun. If so, the picture represents a ludicrous assemblage. It is, however, historically one of the most interesting of American pictures because it shows the three men in the maturity of their powers, as engraved by the first American artist of his time. If Calhoun and Benton were in the picture, we would have together the five men who practically controlled the destinies of this country for forty years. There were other giants in those days but none comparable to the five who, for good or ill, exercised such authority in the republic.

In this connection one story of Webster, as reported by one of his friends, is worthy of record. According to this tale, Webster remarked that he was frequently employed with Clay in cases before the Supreme Court. As Clay was the senior in years and at the bar, he always spoke first, and Webster complained that it took half of his own time to remove the bad impression which Clay had made before he could proceed to argue the merits of the case. "Clay is a great statesman, but no lawyer," said Webster. On the other hand, Calhoun is reported to have said, "Clay is a great lawyer, but no statesman." It would be interesting to know what Clay thought of Webster as a lawyer or Calhoun as a statesman.

ASHLAND AS IT WAS IN HENRY CLAY'S TIME

(From an old print.)

XX

CLAY AND THE BANK

CLAY'S fight for the Bank of the United States, or any national bank, was the bitterest of his career and the most disastrous. Beginning as an opponent of recharter of the first bank, the one whose charter was secured by Hamilton, there are those who found in his later constant defeats a sort of retributive justice for his original position. The truth is, that when Clay, in the Senate in 1810, spoke vehemently against recharter, he had probably given the subject little serious attention. He was no close student, and had come little in contact with the large affairs of business life. There was no reason why a young planter-lawyer in Kentucky should have a profound knowledge of the subject of finance, and it is not likely that he attempted to enlarge his information on the subject. But it so happened that the speech he made against recharter was the one which he regretted more than any other in his life, the one which constantly came up to vex him in his political career.

The financial situation in 1810 was bad enough, as Secretary Gallatin was constantly informing Congress. It was all very well for Jefferson to lay embargoes and Madison to declare non-intercourse, but Gallatin was called upon constantly to meet the deficits in the treasury. He tried all sorts of expedients, and the bank was his right arm. It was not only a safe depository and an excellent fiscal agent, but it was a mighty engine in the commercial and financial world, so that when money was to be bor-

rowed, the bank undertook most of the work. Also it had foreign connections which were exceedingly valuable. Accordingly, Gallatin asked for a recharter, though Madison was in the midst of his serious constitutional doubts upon this as on so many other practical questions.

Considering that the country was in a state of great financial distress, just recovering from the almost total collapse due to the Embargo, and considering further that members of Congress and the administration were talking of going to war either with France, or Spain, or Great Britain, and perhaps all three, the cock-sure spirit which they maintained on the financial question savored of opera bouffe. There were some members of Congress who remembered the days of the Revolution and the chaos that Washington found when he sent Hamilton to take care of the finances, and these were for recharter. But there were others who had a notion that this country could "lick the world," that no one would touch us, that the Jefferson school of political philosophy was complete and self-sustaining, and that the Constitution was to be kept on the shelf much of the time, and under no circumstances must there be any talk about implied powers. Jefferson had been against the bank, and therefore it must be a monster of iniquity and unconstitutionality. In this fine attitude Clay participated. He was the scion of the young Jeffersonians, believed in his country and his State, and had courage and assurance enough for several Napoleons. And, indeed, there was some excuse for such laxity of views in a man who was raised so far from commerce, in a country where whiskey and tobacco were the staples of currency, and where specie was seldom seen, unless some Spanish pieces from down the river. If Clay had confined his argument to the allegations

that the bank was a monstrous monopoly, or that it was unnecessary, or that it was inexpedient, he would have come off with more credit. But the ardent young Senator must needs go into an argument to prove that the bank was unconstitutional, and therefore must be allowed to die when its allotted life of twenty years had expired. That speech was no more convincing then than later, but Clay set great store by it.

What was still more unfortunate was that, if he had voted for recharter, it would have been carried in the Senate, and he probably could have obtained the one or two votes necessary in the House to secure its passage there. And so the bank died at Clay's hands, and when the war with Great Britain came on, Gallatin was badly handicapped in the attempt to raise money. In fact, little was secured, and the country was on the verge of a financial collapse when Clay and his associates made the peace.

By the time the war was over and Clay had lived for a period abroad, had been Speaker for some years, and had learned the art of government, he found the necessity for a bank greater than he had supposed. So when a new bank was projected, he supported it,—Webster now being against it,—and the measure became a law. Clay found little necessity for apologizing at this time for his former course, since the opposition was not great. It was not until fifteen years had passed that he took up the subject in seriousness, and then he found there were many people alive with very good memories.

When he came back to the Senate in December, 1831, the bank recharter was one of the issues which had to be taken into consideration in his programme for the coming campaign. Clay was fighting Jackson, and Jackson was against the bank; therefore it was natural that Clay became its most ardent champion.

Jackson probably knew less about banking when he was elected in 1828 than did Clay in 1810, and cared as little for it as any man could who did not have some responsibilities in the matter. Jackson was not at the start inclined to take any stand on the question, but by the time his first message was sent in it was apparent that he was growing suspicious, for he mentioned it in a way that was not friendly. The bank supporters were taken by surprise when Jackson said that the question of recharter was one to be considered then and there, and intimated that the bank had not given the stable currency which had been expected. The charter had some seven years yet to run, and the bank officers were willing and anxious to let sleeping dogs lie. But they were not permitted to do so. Benton made them speak out. He introduced a test resolution against recharter, and lost, though he commanded more votes than had been expected.

That was all that was done until Clay arrived on the scene. The bank, anxious to keep out of partisan politics, was still willing to let the question rest until after the elections, hoping that Clay would win; but Clay considered it essential to his programme that the fighting be forced, and this he did in a masterful way. The recharter was to be on modified terms, which gave the government more advantages and seemed to protect the people. Once more Benton came to the front and upset the plans of the bank people. While the memorial asking recharter was in the House, Benton prepared a speech in which he preferred a long catalogue of charges against the bank for its violations of law, for its high-handed usury and oppression, and for its general harm to the country. This speech he had delivered by a member, who closed with a demand that a committee go to Philadelphia and investigate the bank. At

first this seemed likely to be refused. The bank's friends were alarmed, Clay was incensed, and some warm words are reported to have passed between him and Benton. On reflection, Clay saw that it would be tantamount to a confession of guilt to refuse to allow the bank to be examined, and so a committee of seven was appointed, but Benton's man was omitted. There were three bank men, three antibank men, and one who signed the majority report and did nothing else. The majority reported against recharter and the minority in favor of the extension asked for. In truth, nothing very serious was discovered against the bank, except that the majority did not feel that they were treated quite as they had expected, and the directors were felt to be assuming that they owned Congress.

The bill for recharter passed after some warm debate, Clay leading the fight in the Senate and directing it in the House. It went, as we have already seen, to Jackson, along with the tariff bill. The tariff survived, but Jackson smote the bank. It was with sardonic humor that he sent in a veto message in which all of the argument and almost the exact language was taken from Clay's speech against recharter of the first bank. That was indeed a hard blow, and it wounded Clay deeply. He had constantly to apologize and explain, and in doing this he was not wholly successful. He tried to maintain a semblance of consistency, while admitting that he had been wrong.

In the Presidential campaign which followed, Clay posed as the champion of the bank. He had no hesitancy in supporting it. He was so conscious of the integrity of his own motives and of the necessity and soundness of the bank that he was not afraid of any demagogic cry that might be raised about an issue between the rich and the poor.

Every great nation had a bank, and our own effort to get along without one had been disastrous.

When the campaign was over and Clay had lost, he still had no fear of the bank, as he thought Jackson might now consent to recharter, since he had won the prize at stake. In this he was mistaken. Jackson had heard that the bank had taken a large interest in the campaign, had spent a great deal of money trying to defeat him, and had issued what he considered libellous publications. Moreover, he began to believe the bank was unsound. This had been hinted at already in the House ; but though the bank was undoubtedly in difficulties, it seems likely that it could have weathered them but for an unfortunate policy which it undertook. During the campaign it had greatly extended its line of credit to the business community to show how essential and how excellent it was in all respects. The result of the campaign being disastrous, it was necessary to retrench somewhat, and the outstanding paper was called in more rapidly than the borrowers had anticipated, so that there was distress in the business community. Many merchants had largely extended their lines of credit to customers on the strength of the bank's liberality, and now they were put to it to get accommodations, and many failed.

During the winter session of Congress the bank played little part in public affairs. It took the whole session for Clay to make his compromise on the tariff question to suit Calhoun ; but he did not entirely forget the bank or the issue. On the side of the bank itself it was unfortunate in that its president, Nicholas Biddle, was a man of too many abilities. He had a great desire to shine as a letter-writer, and indeed he wrote entertainingly, pungently, forcefully, and sometimes wittily ; but he had the fatal gift of sarcasm, and by his literary efforts

made more enemies than friends. He could have done a good deal more by maintaining silence. On one occasion, when examined before a Congressional Committee, he remarked, in response to a question, that the National Bank had never injured a State bank, but it probably could have closed up a great many or all of them if it had wished to use its power. This was an amazing confession for a man to make, and it hurt his cause greatly. But he was to make many more errors. It was during the summer of 1833 that Jackson took the situation in his own hands and removed the deposits from the National Bank,—that is to say, he ceased depositing funds there while continuing all treasury drafts upon that institution. To do this he had to dismiss Duane, his Secretary of the Treasury, and appoint one who was more complaisant. Roger B. Taney, then Attorney General, was promoted to the Treasury for the purpose, and Clay afterwards made much of the alleged corrupt bargain by which Taney was to be made Chief Justice of the United States. If such a bargain was made, it was gall and wormwood to Clay that, though the subject was much ventilated, it did not hurt Jackson at all. That statesman was cast in a sterner mould than Clay, and cared for no imputations of the sort.

The wrath of Clay and his followers was extreme. And, indeed, it would be hard to find any justification for the action, or at least for the way in which it was accomplished. President Biddle was stunned for the moment, and then entered upon a course which made it difficult for his friends to support him with dignity. The directors of the bank issued a public letter in which they spoke of the withdrawal of the deposits as a "pretended order" signed by one who claimed authority from "one Andrew Jackson" and a reputed Cabinet. This letter was brimming

with satire and innuendo. As a newspaper article it would not have been out of place ; as a corporate paper it was a mistake. What Biddle expected to accomplish by issuing such a document it is hard to see, as the only result, as might have been foreseen, was to make the President more angry than ever, while there were many who had really been in favor of the bank who thought the display of arrogance on the part of Biddle ill-advised and an insult to the nation rather than to Jackson.

When Congress met in the fall Clay delivered an impressive speech on the action of the President, which was for the most part in good temper, but was terrible in its invective. Clay felt the situation more keenly because he had forced the fight for the bank against the wishes of the directors, and there is no doubt that the removal of the deposits was the result of the action of the bank in the campaign. It is difficult in these days to appreciate the enormity of this offense as it impressed the greater portion of the business community. The bank was considered an absolutely indispensable engine of national finance,—which it was not,—an admirable medium for preserving exchange all over the country,—which to a great extent it was,—and the essential basis of sound national currency,—which it certainly was not, though it had done much.

Still, in the absence of any other agency it worked, on the whole, very well. It undoubtedly did extort a large price for effecting exchange, was occasionally usurious, but, what was of more importance, it lacked that sound management which is essential to solvency. It has been claimed for the bank that, at the time Jackson came to the Presidency, it was entirely solvent, and that it was only the war which he made upon the institution that compelled it to finally go into bankruptcy under disgraceful circum-

stances. The weakness of this argument is that it assumes that the charter of the bank was a vested right beyond the term for which it was granted; that, as it was an agent of the nation, it must be supported and protected not because it was necessary, but because it had acquired a sort of prescriptive right in the country. Moreover, the assumption that a corporation may protect itself against assaults by corruption or by indulging in unsound finance is not tenable.

Clay, himself, could not easily refuse a request to endorse the note of a friend. In his day such a refusal was a direct imputation of dishonor. But on one occasion he declined to "back" the note of a man he knew on the ground that the man had not the assets nor the prospects of paying. "To hell with Henry Clay," said the enraged suppliant, and he therefore went the rounds of the town berating Henry Clay at every step. Finding no one to endorse his paper, he was about to go home, when Clay met him again, and in a friendly way asked him how much money he actually needed for immediate use. The man replied that he must have one hundred dollars, and that there was not a bank in the country that would loan it to him, and not a blanked blanked man who would go his security. In his quiet fashion Clay said to him: "Will you endorse my note and take the money?" The suppliant almost fell off his mount. In the end the loan was made on this basis and paid some years later. At that time Clay wanted a particularly fine ram, and found that its owner was his former suppliant who asked fifty dollars for it. Clay agreed to pay, and when he came to settle, found that one copper cent was all that would be received as the actual price of transfer. That ancient copper is said to be still preserved in Kentucky.

On another occasion Clay was asked to sue a man for the National Bank, and upon investigation of the case concluded that the man had been only an innocent endorser without consideration. The case was referred to the central bank in Philadelphia, and, though the sum was considerable, it came back with the endorsement of Nicholas Biddle,—"Whatever H. Clay says, will be done in this case." Eventually, the maker of the note made a compromise and became one of Clay's warmest friends, while the endorser, who stood on the brink of ruin, in the campaign of 1843–44, organized the mass meeting at Dayton, Ohio, where over one hundred thousand persons were supposed to have gathered.

Still again it is related that when, in 1833, Clay received a call from a representative of the National Bank, who claimed to have a message from Mr. Biddle, he received the messenger with courtesy, but without expression of friendliness. The messenger in a general way called attention to the subject of a loan which one of Clay's friends had received from the bank, and asked if he was all right. Clay is said to have looked at the man fixedly, and then to have risen to his full six feet two inches, and stalked into another room, leaving his visitor in amazed solitude. After half an hour's wait he called a servant and found that Clay had gone to a distant part of the city. Clay usually employed profane words on such occasions, and nothing angered him more than the intimation that he was using his position in favor of the Biddle aggregation, or that he could be prevailed upon to secure loans or to get any favors. It is remarkable, considering the many times on which he was approached in this manner, that he still preserved his equanimity and favored the institution which had never granted him any favor except that accorded to the most ordinary customer.

The story is told that, while in Philadelphia, he was entertained handsomely by a man supposed to be wealthy, but who actually was on the verge of bankruptcy, and that Clay drank his wine and enjoyed the company. When, on the next day, the host suggested to Clay that he would like accommodation, the statesman's wrath is said to have been terrible, and the language used not fit for print. The same man was approached some years later at the time of the Philadelphia subscription to pay Clay's debts, and he refused, making himself ridiculous by telling the tale. This is on the authority of the grandfather and great-grandfather of the writer, who were on the committee. Included in their narratives is the incident of a marble firm which was approached, and not only gave money for the Clay fund, but announced that it would be glad to furnish the tomb of Clay if he died in their time. There was perfect sincerity in the offer, though it had a sardonic smack to it, and, in the end, the sarcophagus was furnished as promised.

Continuous efforts were made to show that Clay was not only the friend and ally of Nicholas Biddle, but the conspirator who was conniving at a monoply of the national commerce. This was not the case. Clay believed in banks as much as he believed in the post-office, and he had no more notion that the country could get along without one than the other. It is reported that Biddle once sent Clay a request, which the latter did not consider was couched in the proper terms, and an apology followed, which made all the amends possible. Later Biddle asked Clay for a personal favor, which the latter refused to grant, on the ground that it would be improper for him to do so. This affected Biddle deeply, for he sent a prominent man to see Clay, and the interview was far from satisfactory. This was in 1833, when Clay

was doing all he could, as he said, to stop nullification, and he was not much inclined to worry about the bank. What that letter contained is not known, but there was something that seemed to indicate to Clay that he must investigate a little closer, which he did, and became a greater bank man than ever. Those who say that at this time Clay was financially seduced by the bank have no just ground for their opinion.

The bank declared that Jackson drove it into politics, from which it certainly wished to abstain, and that he finally killed it because it went into politics. That under normal conditions the bank might have survived seems likely; that Jackson was unnecessarily harsh in his actions is unquestionable; but there was blame on both sides, and Clay once more was a sufferer. He saw that this bank was dead, and all his hopes were centred on a new institution when the Whigs should come into power.

In his philippic against Jackson, Clay ridiculed the notion that State banks were safer depositories than the National Bank, and gave some figures to establish his contention, which soon was shown to be all too true; for eventually the government lost most of its money in the panic of 1837. But what makes this speech pathetic is its peroration. Clay was convinced that the country was done for unless there was a change from the Jacksonian dynasty. He hoped to be a candidate once more in 1836, though he was not, and on this, as on all occasions, he poured forth the vials of his wrath upon the devoted head of Old Hickory.

"We behold the usual incidents of approaching tyranny. The land is filled with spies and informers, and detraction and denunciation are the orders of the day. People, especially official incumbents in this place, no longer dare speak in the fearless tones of manly freedom, but in the cautious

whispers of trembling slaves. The premonitory symptoms of despotism are upon us, and if Congress do not apply an instantaneous and effective remedy, the fatal collapse will soon come on, and we shall die,—ignobly die, base, mean and abject slaves, the scorn and contempt of mankind,—unpitied, unwept, unmourned!"

Such rhetorical expressions were well enough in politics, but they did not convince the public, which adhered to Jackson and placed his nominee, Van Buren, in the chair. All Clay could do was to get the Senate to pass a resolution of censure upon Jackson for removing the deposits.

When, in 1841, the Whigs did come into power, Clay assumed the position of party dictator without question. One of the chief items in his programme was the resurrection of a national bank to take the place of the sub-treasury system, which had been erected during Van Buren's term practically as it exists to-day. Had Harrison lived there would have been no trouble, but Tyler, who turned apostate, seemed more desirous of killing Clay than of accomplishing any other object. Though Tyler had at one time professed himself a good Whig, he now proclaimed that he had never been anything but a strict construction Democrat, and that this was known when he was nominated. It was idle to fight over mere terms, so long as Tyler was determined to carry out his personal ends regardless of any other considerations. Thus was for the first time demonstrated the folly of nominating for vice-president a man not a stalwart party leader.

The bank measure was passed by Congress, and not until the last moment was there any suggestion of a veto, since Tyler had hinted vaguely at some such legislation in his message. Tyler had by this time been informed by some superserviceable and ambitious friends that the way to get along in

politics was to set up in business for himself, and use his power as President to draw from both of the regular parties, and thus become President once more. It is exceedingly difficult to account for the psychological changes through which Tyler passed in a few weeks. He vetoed the bank bill in a message which was cunningly devised. He did not at this time object to any bank, but pointed out specific objections, and his intimation was that, if amended in accordance with his views, the bill would be signed. From this point there are diverging statements of what happened. The friends of Tyler indignantly deny that he was willing to sign any sort of a bank bill, but members of his cabinet and prominent Whigs have stated so categorically as to be entitled to belief, that Tyler agreed to a new "fiscal corporation" bill which met his objections, that he actually took the measure and interlined it to correct some slight details, and that he gave his solemn promise to sign it. This new bill was promptly passed, and as promptly vetoed ; the Cabinet, excepting Webster, resigned, and the Whig party put on mourning.

Clay's attacks on Tyler were the more terrible because constrained. He did not denounce him as he had Jackson, for Tyler at one time had been one of his warmest friends and had resigned from the Senate rather than obey the instructions of the Virginia Legislature to vote for the expunging resolution of Benton, designed to clear the record of Jackson from censure for removing the deposits. But Clay was bitter and severe. He convicted Tyler of perfidy and of inconsistency, which did no good at all. Senator Rives, of Virginia, having defended Tyler, Clay turned on him in a speech which is said to have been one of the most drastic in his career, though as reported it hardly bears that

stamp. It would seem that Clay wanted some victim, and in Rives he found one who could be hammered without mercy. This was the end of all bank legislation of the sort. The national banks established in the Civil War have no relation whatever to the former national banks, and are an ingeniously contrived institution growing out of conditions which never could have arisen in peace.

In this connection it is well to consider Clay's whole position in relation to the currency. It is not strange that a man of his temperament, environment, and education should be little versed in finance, that most difficult of the sciences. Though he ever insisted that he was not in favor permanently of paper currency, his predilections were all in its favor, and his vote was almost invariably against all efforts to restore the specie standard. In the South little specie was circulated, and not only bank notes, but promissory notes were commonly used and settlements made once a year. Clay did not believe there was enough specie to be secured to conform to Benton's plan of using it alone as national currency. In this he was mistaken. The original mint laws of the country had established the ratio between gold and silver at fifteen to one, which was not correct, and as a result, following Gresham's law, all the gold left the country. Benton, against the vote of Clay, secured the passage of an entirely new mintage law, making the ratio sixteen to one, which was not strictly correct, and establishing branch mints. As a result gold poured back into the country, and for the first time in their lives many persons actually used gold coin in business. These were known as "Benton's mint drops," and greatly aided Jackson in politics.

When the Specie Circular was issued, by which the government refused to accept anything but

specie for public lands, Clay once more poured out the vials of his wrath upon the devoted heads of Benton and Jackson. This order was issued because of the speculation in public lands by means of irredeemable bank notes. Millions of acres were sold, and all the government got was notes of doubtful value. As the government had a right to demand coin, it did so, though the order was unnecessarily harsh and was made at a critical time.

The panic of 1837 was by the Whigs attributed entirely to the fact that Jackson had withdrawn the bank deposits and had issued the Specie Circular. There is no doubt that these two acts precipitated the crisis, but it would be unwise to say they were the sole causes. For years the country had been engaged in wild speculation, the number of State banks had increased to a thousand, and most of these had little specie to redeem their notes, while others had an utterly inadequate amount. Making money by the printing-press proved so easy that it became a popular industry, and there were some political philosophers who thought that at last the era of complete and continuous national prosperity had set in.

When Jackson perceived that the government was in danger of losing the lands, and the alleged money paid for them, he issued the Specie Circular against the advice of his entire Cabinet, who thought it premature. There was not enough available specie in the country to pay for the lands, especially as the treasury was just being depleted to distribute the surplus among the States. Immediately business depression set in, and when Benton warned Van Buren, just before he took office, of the coming storm, "Matty Van" replied by stating that Benton's friends feared he was a little "gone in the head" on the subject. In a few months the storm

broke. The panic was the greatest the country had ever known, and one of its results was the election of the Whig candidates in 1840. In the meantime, Clay and others struggled for remedial legislation, though not much was accomplished. The nation lost heavily by the failure of nearly every bank containing Federal funds; but, though the Specie Circular was eventually modified, nothing was done towards establishing a new bank. Eventually, the discovery of gold in California settled the specie standard beyond all question, and Clay was compelled to let the subject alone.

His policy in supporting the bank was that of a public man who looked upon the institution as essential to the government. There was no trace of corruption in his connection with the institution, though such charges were made, only to be refuted. He was at one time attorney for the bank, which was proper enough. He borrowed money, which he repaid. His impulsive nature led him into a warmth of expression, in his championship, such as gave rise to tales of personal interest, but these were untrue. In financial matters, Clay was scrupulous in the extreme. He borrowed money, as did all men at that time and this, but he paid his debts. As a constructive financier he had his limitations; but what he would have done, if given an opportunity, cannot well be stated, since he was ever in opposition to the administration, and no bill that was passed entirely met his views. They were modified to meet the known views of moderates, and the very last one sent to Tyler was so far from meeting Clay's ideas that he must have seen its demise with less tears than under other circumstances.

Clay, as a financier, ever sought to lead the country into what seemed to him the proper paths

of legislation. That his views were less sound than those of Benton has come to be generally recognized, though both parties indulged in legislation with a recklessness that was far from commendable. It is but fair to his memory to quote from a speech made at a critical time, when he was accused of being personally interested in the corporation. Benton charged that at one time seventy members of Congress were given favors by the bank to influence their votes. Clay arose in his seat one day,

"and begged permission to trespass a few moments longer on the Senate, to make a statement concerning himself personally. He had heard that one high in office had allowed himself to assert that a dishonorable connection had subsisted between him (Clay) and the Bank of the United States. When the present charter was granted, he voted for it; and, having done so, he did not feel himself at liberty to subscribe, and he did not subscribe, for a single share in the stock of the bank, although he confidently anticipated a great rise in the value of the stock. A few years afterwards, during the presidency of Mr. Jones, it was thought, by some of his friends at Philadelphia, expedient to make him (Clay) a director of the Bank of the United States; and he was made a director without any consultation with him. For that purpose five shares were purchased for him, by a friend, for which he (Clay) afterwards paid. When he ceased to be a director, a short time subsequently, he disposed of those shares. He does not now own, and has not for many years been the proprietor of, a single share.

"When Mr. Cheves was appointed president of the bank, its affairs in the States of Kentucky and Ohio were in great disorder; and his (Clay's) professional services were engaged during several years for the Bank in those States. He brought a vast number of suits, and transacted a great amount of professional business for the bank. Among other suits was that for the recovery of the one hundred thousand dollars, seized under the authority of a law of Ohio, which he carried through the inferior and supreme courts. He was paid by the bank the usual compensation for these services, and no more. And he ventured to assert that no professional fees were ever more honestly and fairly earned. He had not, however, been the counsel for the

bank for upwards of eight years past. He does not owe the bank, or any one of its branches, a solitary cent. About twelve or fifteen years ago, owing to the failure of a highly estimable (now deceased) friend, a large amount of debt had been, as his indorser, thrown upon him (Clay), and it was principally due to the Bank of the United States. He (Clay) established for himself a rigid economy, a sinking fund, and worked hard, and paid off the debt long since, without receiving from the bank the slightest favor. Whilst others around him were discharging their debts in property, at high valuations, he periodically renewed his note, paying the discount, until it was wholly extinguished."

This is the official report of his speech, which in those times was in the third person, as is that of the speeches in the British Parliament to this day.

XXI

SENATORIAL COLLOQUIES

In a career in the House and Senate covering most of forty-six years, Clay was brought in direct relations with almost every statesman of the first half of the century. Washington and Hamilton had passed away before he appeared on the stage, but, aside from these, Clay was personally known to nearly every man of importance who served his country from the Declaration of Independence to near the outbreak of the Civil War.

In his ordinary intercourse with men Clay was courteous, fascinating, almost hypnotic. It was difficult to escape from his spell, even when members differed from him absolutely in politics. The story is told of a Jacksonian Democrat who was seldom seen in his seat, but was summoned from a committee room when there was a roll-call. On being reproved for his laxity he said :

"Gentlemen, I was sent here to support Jackson and fight Clay. I have been instructed by the Legislature and warned from the White House. I am willing to do my duty when I can, but I'm d—d if I can listen to Henry Clay speak and believe he is wrong."

In the present day there are not many speeches in Congress which convince members. It is probable that in the earlier period not many men could actually carry a proposition by mere force of a speech, but it is fairly certain that no man who ever sat in either branch of Congress had the moving power of

Clay. He could persuade, argue, convict, and dragoon more men than any other American representative. This wonderful gift, however, was not always sufficient to carry his legislation through, as he was to a great extent overborne either in the Congressional halls or at the White House. With all that personal winsomeness which amounted to feminine charm, without detracting from his virility, he was an imperious man, and drew the line exceedingly close at times. He was ever ready for a forensic encounter, and first and last was in angry debate with nearly all the members. He brooked neither opposition nor the slightest criticism, and was, metaphorically speaking, ever ready for a knock-down blow, when Senators disagreed with him. As he was Speaker of the House during practically all of the years he sat in that body, he had little need for argument there, since he was the ruling power. Only when in Committee of the Whole did he come into personal contact with members, and then seldom with any severity. He was then leading, not driving.

In 1824, while serving his last term in the House, he came into contact with John Randolph, as already recited. Randolph was in his age, and greatly disturbed mentally, so that his sanity was questioned. Only a little later Clay challenged him to the duel for remarks made over the "corrupt bargain," though he hesitated some time as to whether his opponent was mentally sound. His excuse was, that as the State of Virginia, wherein he (Clay) was born, had just elected him to the Senate, it would be absurd to claim that he was mentally and morally incompetent. This passage at arms, both in the House and on "the field of honor," rankled long in the breasts of both, and both were in their hearts ashamed of their conduct. Clay's last encounter with Randolph was when the old man was dying. By this time

they had become reconciled under the following circumstances, as related by himself:

"You ask how amity was restored between Mr. Randolph and me? There was no explanation, no intervention. Observing him in the Senate one night, feeble, and looking as if he were not long for this world, and being myself engaged on a work of peace (the compromise tariff) with corresponding feelings, I shook hands with him. The salutation was cordial on both sides. I afterwards left a card at his lodgings, where, I understand, he has been confined by sickness."

A little later Randolph was able to be carried to the Senate, and as Clay arose to address the Senate, the invalid's view was obscured, whereupon he cried to his neighboring Senators: "Lift me up! Lift me up! I came here to hear that voice again."

It was the last time he heard it, but it is a tribute to the wonderful powers of Clay that one of the last sentiments uttered in public by Randolph was this:

"There is one man, and only one man, who can save the Union. That man is Henry Clay. I know he has the power. I believe he will be found to have the patriotism and firmness equal to the occasion."

This incident is mentioned first because some of the encounters between Clay and others did not result so happily. He had many disputes with Benton, with whom he was at various times upon terms of personal friendship and deadly enmity. There were years when he would not speak to Webster, and other years when he would only recognize Calhoun in the most formal manner, though they were acting in a sort of harmony all the time. In 1832 Clay came into contact with the venerable Samuel Smith, of Maryland, one of the few survivors of the Revolutionary War, and a man of many abilities, though open to severe criticism for many of his acts.

Clay was at this time less than fifty years old, with the most important portion of his career before him. He was preparing for the Presidential campaign of that year, and in the course of debate mentioned his age and offered an apology for what might be deemed failing powers on account of his advanced years. Upon this, Hayne very gracefully turned the subject into a compliment, saying that Clay had so beautifully apologized and explained that he had proved himself to be in the full flush of manhood. This was done with grace, but Smith in his heavy sort of way seemed to think that Clay was reflecting on advancing years in a personal manner, and got up to announce that he (old enough to be Clay's father) could not complain of advancing years or infirmities attendant thereon, nor would he offer any apology for the insufficiency of his own speech. This stirred Clay to the quick. His original statement had been rhetorical rather than actual, and Clay would have been the first man to resent the insinuation from anyone else, so he considered that Hayne and Smith were making game of him and returned to the attack. He seemed especially annoyed because Smith had said that when Clay was speaking of his age he (Smith) had overheard a young woman say: "Why, I think he is mighty pretty."

Now, Clay was fond enough of the praise of women, but did not relish this sort of an injection into the debate, so he made an attack on Smith as to his political action, hoping to turn the personalities into a more agreeable channel. Smith replied warmly that as far back as 1795 he was in favor of protection, and that he had afterwards abandoned it. Clay then quoted the lines:

> "Old politicians chew on wisdom past,
> And *totter* on in blunders to the last."

Smith retorted, in rage :

"The last allusion is unworthy of the gentleman. Totter, sir, I totter? Though some twenty years older than the gentleman, I can yet stand firm, and am yet able to correct his errors. I could take a view of the gentleman's course, which would show how inconsistent he has been." [Mr. Clay exclaimed : "Take it, sir, take it—I dare you."] [Cries of "order."]

"No, sir," said Mr. Smith, "I will not take it. I will not so far disregard what is due to the dignity of the Senate."

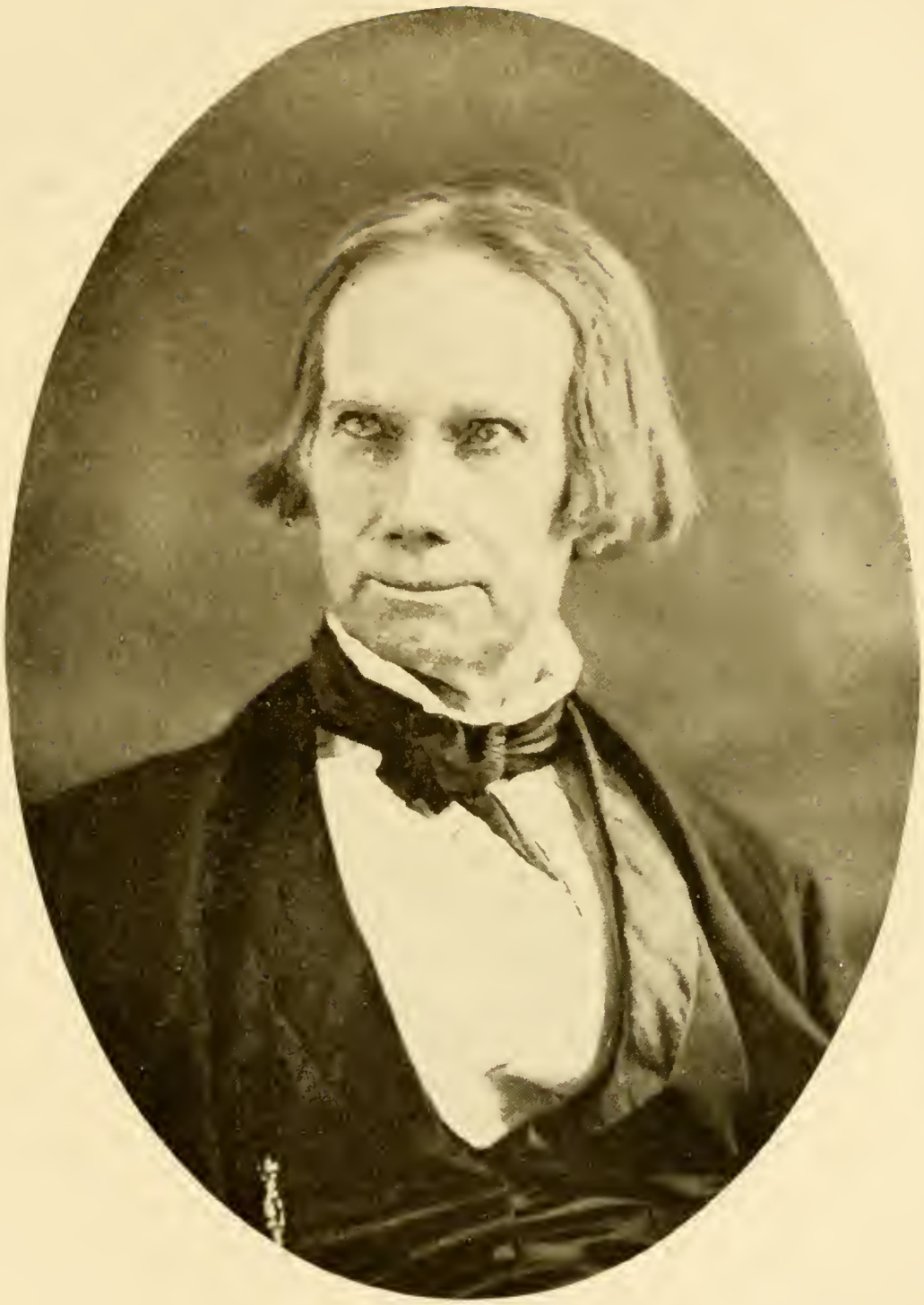
This is a curious example of Clay's temperament when under unnatural excitement. As a rule, he had the greatest respect for old age, and would have been the last to insult gray hairs. It so happened that at the right psychological moment the connection between Smith's age and his desertion of what Clay supposed to be a righteous cause gave birth to sentiments that in his better moments he must have regretted.

Another encounter was even more ridiculous. In 1834, after the hard times had come on which Clay and his followers attributed to the Specie Circular and the withdrawal of the deposits, Clay made in the Senate an impassioned speech addressed really to the nation, but with an eye to spectacular effect at the moment. Clay was a genuine actor. He could assume almost any rôle with complete verisimilitude, and in this case he was undoubtedly actuated by the highest motives, though the judgment he exercised can well be criticised in view of the sequel. Van Buren was in the chair, and although all Senators must address the Chair, Clay chose to make the occasion personal. He spoke to him as the confidant and political partner of Jackson, and not to the Vice-President. After dilating at length on the woes of the country, Clay spoke directly to Van Buren as follows :

"By your official and personal relations with the President, you maintain with him an intercourse which I neither enjoy nor covet. Go to him and tell him, without exaggeration, but in the language of truth and sincerity, the actual condition of his bleeding country. Tell him it is nearly ruined and undone by the measures which he has been induced to put in operation. Tell him that his experiment is operating on the nation like the philosopher's experiment upon a convulsed animal, in an exhausted receiver, and that it must expire, in agony, if he does not pause, give it free and sound circulation, and suffer the energies of the people to be revived and restored. Tell him that, in a single city, more than sixty bankruptcies, involving a loss of upwards of fifteen millions of dollars, have occurred. Tell him of the alarming decline in the value of all property, of the depreciation of all the products of industry, of the stagnation in every branch of business, and of the close of numerous manufacturing establishments, which, a few short months ago, were in active and flourishing operation. Depict to him, if you can find language to portray, the heart-rending wretchedness of thousands of the working classes cast out of employment. Tell him of the tears of helpless widows, no longer able to earn their bread, and of unclad and unfed orphans who have been driven, by his policy, out of the busy pursuits in which but yesterday they were gaining an honest livelihood. Say to him that if firmness be honorable, when guided by truth and justice, it is intimately allied to another quality, of the most pernicious tendency, in the prosecution of an erroneous system. Tell him how much more true glory is to be won by retracing false steps, than by blindly rushing on until his country is overwhelmed in bankruptcy and ruin. Tell him of the ardent attachment, the unbounded devotion, the enthusiastic gratitude, towards him, so often signally manifested by the American people, and that they deserve, at his hands, better treatment. Tell him to guard himself against the possibility of an odious comparison with that worst of the Roman emperors, who, contemplating with indifference the conflagration of the mistress of the world, regaled himself during the terrific scene in the throng of his dancing courtiers. If you desire to secure for yourself the reputation of a public benefactor, describe to him truly the universal distress already produced, and the certain ruin which must ensue from perseverance in his measures. Tell him that he has been abused, deceived, betrayed, by the wicked counsels of unprincipled men around him."

There was a good deal more of this apostrophe, and it reads well. In fact, it reads much like some of the speeches which Shakespeare puts in the mouths of his characters, rather than any recorded history. Clay sat down in a perfect heat of enthusiasm. Whether he actually expected the Vice-President to be moved by what he said, or whether he thought the country would understand his appeal, cannot be stated, but it is certain that he was not prepared for the result. During a considerable portion of his speech Clay had abused both Jackson and Van Buren, and there were some members of the Senate who thought the occasion was ripe for pistols and coffee for two. When Clay had concluded, Van Buren, with great deliberation, called a Senator to the chair, and walked leisurely over to Clay and asked him for a pinch of his Maccoboy snuff, as if nothing in the world had happened. Clay, with the best composure he could muster, gave him his snuff-box, and as Van Buren resumed his seat the Kentucky statesman had a sinking heart, knowing that he had met a man who had, if not his own original arts, at least the power to snuff political candles.

On a previous occasion, Clay had come into conflict with Benton, because the latter had become a warm supporter of Jackson. In early life Jackson had engaged in a brawl with Benton and the latter's brother, in which a large number of persons were wounded, but no one killed. For years afterwards Benton had hated Jackson, and was a supporter, at first, of Clay for the Presidency in 1824. Later Jackson and Benton became reconciled and the warmest of friends. When Clay fell out with Jackson, he took occasion to taunt Benton with the fact that he had been formerly opposed to Jackson and had now come to his support. To this Benton replied :



HENRY CLAY

(From a daguerrotype taken in 1847. Declared by many of his most intimate friends to be the most characteristic portrait of Clay's maturer years that exists. Photographed especially for this volume.)

"It is true, sir, that I had an affray with General Jackson, and that I did complain of his conduct. We fought, sir; and we fought, I hope, like men. When the explosion was over, there remained no ill will, on either side. No vituperation or system of petty persecution was kept up between us. Yes, sir, it is true, that I had the personal difficulty, which the Senator from Kentucky has had the delicacy to bring before the Senate."

He then referred to an alleged "adjourned question of veracity" between Clay and Jackson, and practically called him a liar, which stirred Clay to anger. Clay said:

"The assertion that there is 'an adjourned question of veracity' between me and General Jackson, is, whether made by man or master, absolutely false. The President made a certain charge against me, and he referred to witnesses to prove it. I denied the truth of the charge. He called upon his witnesses to prove it. I leave it to the country to say, whether that witness sustained the truth of the President's allegation. That witness is now on his passage to St. Petersburg, with a commission in his pocket. [Mr. B. here said aloud, in his place, the Mississippi and the fisheries—Mr. Adams and the fisheries—every body understands it.] Mr. C. said, I do not yet understand the Senator. He then remarked upon the 'prediction' which the Senator from Misouri had disclaimed. Can he, said Mr. C., look to me, and say that he never used the language attributed to him in the placard which he refers to? He says, Colonel Lawless denies that he used the words in the State of Missouri. Can you look me in the face, sir [addressing Mr. B.], and say that you never used that language out of the State of Missouri?"

BENTON: "I look, sir, and repeat that it is an atrocious calumny; and I will pin it to him who repeats it here."

CLAY: "Then I declare before the Senate that you said to me the very words—"

[Mr. B. in his place, while Mr. Clay was yet speaking, several times loudly repeated the word "false, false, false."]

CLAY: "I fling back the charge of atrocious calumny upon the Senator from Missouri."

A call to order was here heard from several Senators.

THE PRESIDENT *pro tem.*: "The Senator from Kentucky is not in order, and must take his seat."

CLAY: "Will the Chair state the point of order?"

The Chair said it could enter into no explanations with the Senator.

CLAY: "I shall be heard. I demand to know what point of order can be taken against me, which was not equally applicable to the Senator from Missouri."

The President *pro tem.* stated that he considered the whole discussion as out of order. He would not have permitted it had he been in the chair at its commencement.

Mr. Poindexter said he was in the chair at the commencement of the discussion, and did not then see fit to check it. But he was now of the opinion that it was not in order.

BENTON: "I apologize to the Senate for the manner in which I have spoken; but not to the Senator from Kentucky."

CLAY: "To the Senate I also offer an apology. To the Senator from Missouri none."

Many of those who read this book will recall that this sort of debate was very common a generation ago in the Senate, after the Civil War had stirred up animosities, but fortunately it has become more rare in recent times.

A much more serious affair occurred during Van Buren's administration, when Clay was repenting of the part he had taken in bringing about the compromise on the tariff. He had dragooned Calhoun into accepting his bill, and both were ever afterwards sorry. From that time forth to 1850, the two men were scarcely ever in unison. In 1838 a very extended debate took place between them, in which Clay was made to feel, so far as Calhoun was able, that the latter was the winner. Clay had made, in the course of some remarks concerning Calhoun, the following very accurate statements:

"The doctrine of the Senator in 1816 was, as he now states it, that bank notes being in fact received by the executive, although contrary to law, it was constitutional to create a Bank of the United States. And in 1834, finding that bank, which was constitutional in its inception, but had

become unconstitutional in its progress, yet in existence, it was quite constitutional to propose, as the senator did, to continue it twelve years longer.

"The Senator and I began our public career nearly together; we remained together throughout the war. We agreed as to a Bank of the United States—as to a protective tariff—as to internal improvements; and lately as to those arbitrary and violent measures which characterized the administration of General Jackson. No two men ever agreed better together in respect to important measures of public policy. We concur in nothing now."

Calhoun could not deny the impeachment in terms, but he had his say at length, during which he remarked:

"The absence of these higher qualities of the mind is conspicuous throughout the whole course of the Senator's [Clay's] public life. To this it may be traced that he prefers the specious to the solid, and the plausible to the true. To the same cause, combined with an ardent temperament, it is owing that we ever find him mounted on some popular and favorite measure, which he whips along, cheered by the shouts of the multitude, and never dismounts till he has ridden it down. Thus, at one time, we find him mounted on the protective system, which he rode down; at another, on internal improvement; and now he is mounted on a bank, which will surely share the same fate, unless those who are immediately interested shall stop him in his headlong career. It is the fault of his mind to seize on a few prominent and striking advantages, and to pursue them eagerly without looking to consequences. Thus, in the case of the protective system, he was struck with the advantages of manufactures; and, believing that high duties was the proper mode of protecting them, he pushed forward the system, without seeing that he was enriching one portion of the country at the expense of the other; corrupting the one and alienating the other; and, finally, dividing the community into two great hostile interests, which terminated in the overthrow of the system itself. So, now, he looks only to a uniform currency, and a bank as the means of securing it, without once reflecting how far the banking system has progressed, and the difficulties that impede its farther progress; that banking and politics are running together to their mutual destruction; and that the

only possible mode of saving his favorite system is to separate it from the government.

"To the defects of understanding, which the Senator attributes to me, I make no reply. It is for others, and not me, to determine the portion of understanding which it has pleased the Author of my being to bestow on me. It is, however, fortunate for me, that the standard by which I shall be judged is not the false, prejudiced, and, as I have shown, unfounded opinion which the Senator has expressed; but my acts."

There is a good deal more of this which it might be interesting to quote if space permitted. The climax came soon. Calhoun announced, in the course of a three days' running debate, that in 1833 he had Clay on his back. This was an astonishing statement, considering how much Clay had sacrificed to make the peace at that time. It made him boil with indignation, and he replied :

"The Senator from South Carolina said that he [Clay] was flat on his back, and that he was my master. Sir, I would not own him as my slave. He my master ! and I compelled by him ! And, as if it were impossible to go far enough in one paragraph, he refers to certain letters of his own to prove that I was flat on my back ! and, that I was not only on my back, but another Senator and the President had robbed me ! I was flat on my back, and unable to do anything but what the Senator from South Carolina permitted me to do !

"Why, sir, I gloried in my strength, and was compelled to introduce the compromise bill ; and compelled, too, by the Senator, not in consequence of the weakness, but of the strength, of my position. If it was possible for the Senator from South Carolina to introduce one paragraph without showing the egotism of his character, he would not now acknowledge that he wrote letters home to show that he (Clay) was flat on his back, while he was indebted to him for that measure which relieved him from the difficulties in which he was involved. Now, what was the history of the case ? Flat as he was on his back, he was able to produce that compromise, and to carry it through the Senate, in opposition to the most strenuous exertions of the gentleman

who, the Senator from South Carolina said, had supplanted him, and in spite of his determined and unceasing opposition. There was a sort of necessity operating on me to compel me to introduce that measure. No necessity of a personal character influenced me; but considerations involving the interests, the peace and harmony of the whole country, as well as of the State of South Carolina, directed me in the course pursued."

This was true enough, but the worst of it all was that Clay was made to feel that he had sacrificed conscience and patriotism for the sake of the Union, only to find that there had been no compromise, and that he was accused of being guilty of all the crimes in the political calendar. After this the relations between Clay and Calhoun were strained until near the end of their lives.

A few years later, during Tyler's administration, they came into angry debate again over the "fiscal bill," as Clay's new national bank bill was called. Clay was growing more imperious, not only because he was the leader and soul of the Whig party, but because he felt there were Senators striving for delay in favor of Tyler's schemes. All sorts of amendments were offered to the fiscal bill, and Clay got tired and expressed his views in terms that admitted of no mistake, and there was talk of a resolution introducing the previous question or "gag law," as it was then termed in the Senate. Calhoun objected to Clay's bill because it reserved a large block of stock for the government, as in former cases, and this he called plunder and accused Clay of insidious motives in the bill, whereupon the following colloquy took place:

CLAY: "I said no such thing, sir; I did not say anything about the *motives* of Senators."

Calhoun said he understood the Senator's meaning to be that the motives of the opposition were factious and frivolous.

CLAY: "I said no such thing, sir."

CALHOUN: "It was so understood."

CLAY: "No, sir; no, sir."

CALHOUN: "Yes, sir, yes; it could be understood in no other way."

CLAY: "What I did say was, that the *effect* of such amendments, and of consuming time in debating them, would be a waste of that time from the business of the session; and, consequently, would produce unnecessary delay and embarrassment. I said nothing of *motives*—I only spoke of the practical *effect* and result."

Calhoun said he understood it had been repeated for the second time that there could be no other motive or object entertained by the Senators in the opposition, in making amendments and speeches on this bill, than to embarrass the majority by frivolous and vexatious delay.

Clay insisted that he made use of no assertions as to *motives*.

CALHOUN: "If the Senator means to say that he does not accuse this side of the House of bringing forward propositions for the sake of delay, he wished to understand him."

CLAY: "I intended that."

However, this quarrel brought about no good result, as the bill was vetoed by Tyler. In the debate, Benton dared Clay to bring on his "gag law," and soon the great Kentuckian was engaged in an encounter with Senator King, of Alabama. Clay was in a hurry for some action, and it may be said that at this time there was the greatest exhibition of filibustering known up to that time in the Senate, which was beginning to lose its dignity under the heat of partisan debate. When Clay threatened once more to enforce closure, the following colloquy occurred:

Mr. King said the Senator from Kentucky complained of three weeks and a half having been lost in amendments to his bill. Was not the Senator aware that it was himself and his friends had consumed most of that time? But now that the minority had to take it up, the Senate is told there must be a gag law. Did he understand that it was the intention of the Senator to introduce that measure?

CLAY: "I will, sir; I will!"

KING: "I tell the Senator, then, that he may make his arrangements at his boarding-house for the winter."

CLAY: "Very well, sir."

Mr. King was truly sorry to see the honorable senator so far forgetting what is due to the Senate, as to talk of coercing it by any possible abridgment of its free action. The freedom of debate had never yet been abridged in that body, since the foundation of this government. Was it fit or becoming, after fifty years of unrestrained liberty, to threaten it with a gag law? He could tell the Senator that, peaceable a man as he (Mr. King) was, whenever it was attempted to violate that sanctuary, he, for one, would resist that attempt even unto the death.

However mild this may seem, in view of later events of a similar though more serious character, it may be said that it created an extraordinary sensation, and gave to Clay the title of Party Dictator, which he resented with great warmth, though, in a proper sense, the appellation was correct.

The last controversy of the session occurred with Senator Archer, of Virginia, who defended Tyler against the aspersions of Clay. Clay, disappointed at the result of his programme's defeat and bitter against Tyler, yet preserved the decorum of debate until taunted to the last degree. Archer had accused Clay of making statements which were not made by him. Clay had been careful in all such debate to use the language of alleged friends of Tyler, not only because that was better politics, but because it was a deeper stab at the man, while at the same time it did not make Clay out an ingrate. But though Clay was careful enough of the feelings of Tyler when possible, he complained that Tyler never had any kind feelings towards himself. The debate arose over the fact that whereas Tyler had a cabinet, he always acted in direct opposition to its views and accepted the dictum of a lot of unauthorized persons. Archer had the difficult task of de-

fending such a condition of affairs, and failed miserably, according to the reported colloquy,—

CLAY: "I repeat it here, in the face of the country, that there are persons who call themselves, *par excellence*, the friends of John Tyler, and yet oppose all the leading measures of the administration of John Tyler. I will say that the gentleman himself is not of that cabal, and that his colleague is not. Further than that, this deponent saith not, and will not say."

ARCHER: "The gentleman has not adverted to the extreme harshness of the language he employed when he was first up, and he would appeal to gentlemen present for the correctness of the version he (Archer) had given of it. The gentleman said there was a cabal formed—a vile kitchen cabinet—low and infamous, who surrounded the President and instigated him to the course he had taken. That was the language employed by the honorable Senator. Now suppose language such as this had been used in the other branch of the national legislature, which might be supposed to refer to him (Archer) where he had not an opportunity of defending himself; what would be the course of his colleagues there? The course of those high-minded and honorable men there towards him, would be similar to that he had taken in regard to them."

CLAY: "Mr. President, did I say one word about the colleagues of the gentleman? I said there was a cabal formed for the purpose of breaking down the present Cabinet, and that that cabal did not number a corporal's guard; but I did not say who that cabal was, and do not mean to be interrogated. Any member on this floor has a right to ask me if I alluded to him; but nobody else has. I spoke of rumor only."

Mr. Archer said a few words, but he was not heard distinctly enough to be reported.

CLAY: "I said no such thing. I said there was a rumor—that public fame had stated that there was a cabal formed for the purpose of removing the Cabinet, and I ask the gentleman if he has not heard of that rumor?"

The expression "corporal's guard" stuck to Tyler throughout his administration, and neither Tyler nor Clay became President in 1845, as each had hoped.

These exhibitions of temper and temperament in the forum of debate give a definite view of one side of Clay's character. He was imperious, irritable at delay, and apt to become bitter during the heat of debate. One might suppose from his wrangles that he was a quarrelsome man. In fact, he was generally the soul of good nature, and, in most instances, the *amende honorable* after a squabble was soon made. Against Webster, Calhoun, and Benton did he long harbor ill feeling, but with all of them he became reconciled before the end. None loved him the less for these ardent displays of his emotions.

On another occasion he engaged in a lively controversy with Senator James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, who had formerly been his friend, but whom he long believed to be the real author of the Kremer letter. In the colloquy that ensued on this occasion, Clay, for the only time on record, made some personal remarks offensive to his opponent. Attacking Buchanan, that Senator replied that he was mistaken in supposing that he (Buchanan) was looking at him (Clay). To this Clay replied that owing to the gentleman's roving eye—referring to his strabismus—it was impossible to tell what he was looking at.

The controversy involved a number of considerations, in which Clay's friends thought he had gone too far, and one of them remonstrated with him for allowing his temper to get the best of him. All that Clay would say was,—

"I don't like that man ; he writes letters."

Thereupon he took some peppermint candy out of his pocket and proceeded to munch it until his anger was gone and the *entente cordiale* was restored. Clay was very fond of this sort of candy and considered it the best possible antidote for a bad spell of temper.

Clay wore a seven and five-eighths hat, the same as Mr. Webster ; and on one occasion when he went to the cloak-room, he found that some one had appropriated his head-covering and left in its place a hat of about six and one-half inches in size. This put him somewhat out of humor, as to wear such a small hat would look ridiculous. Finding no substitute he walked down Capitol Hill like a Roman Senator, to the intense delight of the populace. The next day his hat was restored by the borrower, who offered an apology by saying that he regretted very much that Clay should have taken his hat, as he was obliged to walk down the Avenue looking like a candle with an extinguisher on. At first Clay was inclined to resent the assumption that he was the one at fault, but looking at the diminutive Senator, who belonged to the opposition, he remarked :

"Don't you mean distinguisher?"

And that was all.

XXII

PUBLIC LAND DISTRIBUTION AND OTHER POLICIES

One important feature of Clay's American system was the distribution of the surplus of funds arising from sales of public lands to the various States according to population. To this policy he adhered with a pertinacity that is astonishing in view of the unfortunate result of a single experiment in that direction. We are now become so great a nation, the States are as a rule so prosperous, that it is difficult to remember that seventy-five years ago a very different situation existed. The American people have always been enterprising, and to an extent visionary. In 1830 there were, perhaps, relatively more wild schemes for getting rich than there have been at any time since. Steamboats had begun to swarm the rivers, especially in the West. The Erie Canal had almost made a revolution in our agricultural and commercial system, while the invention of the railway, if it may be so termed, seemed to open up wonderful vistas to the imagination.

Clay ever asserted that his sole aim in legislation concerning land was to accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number. When accused of being against the settler, he said that he only wanted to get the real farmer onto the land, and would be willing to make any rational sacrifice to accomplish this purpose, but he was convinced that speculators would alone have the advantage.

On one occasion, Benton came to Clay in high dudgeon and said that the latter was opposing the interests of the sturdy yeoman. This aroused Clay's

ire, who remarked that he (Clay) was ploughing corn before Benton was born. He had, however, found that many of those who were blatant advocates of the poor were not accustomed to delving into the soil. This was bitter enough, but when Benton came out in favor of practically free lands for the settlers, Clay pointed out that it was very good of Missouri to ask this benefice of the government, but, as a matter of fact, the lands had been purchased by the treasure of the whole Union, and it was absurd to say that they should be thrown away on those who might not be deserving.

There is a story that, after one of these debates, Benton and Clay met and were at first inclined to be friendly, but finally quarreled over the seventh cause,—in fact, the lie direct,—and for years were not on speaking terms, though according to Shakespearean precedent they did not draw swords. Their last reconciliation was in 1850, and was not entirely complete.

The great asset of the country was its rich land. Most of the original thirteen States retained their own lands and got some more, but the Great Northwest Territory, the Southwestern Territory adjoining Georgia, and the Louisiana Territory were national domain. These lands had filled up with settlers rather slowly after the war of 1812 until about 1825, when the expansion of the population began at an enormous rate, and continued for ten years. The government abandoned its former plan of selling the land to great corporations or associations, and dealt direct with the settler. The price was made low, and, eventually, preference was given to actual settlers who had the right to "preempt" the soil. Clay, with his rather imperial notions, felt that the government was wrong in selling such valuable lands so cheaply. Benton was continually striving to get

better terms for the settlers and, in the end, succeeded, though usually against the vote of Clay. It was the proposition of Senator Foot, of Connecticut, to restrict the sale of public lands to those in the market and dismiss the public surveyors that brought on the famous forensic duel between Hayne and Webster which had such mighty consequences. Clay was not in the Senate at that time, but came back soon afterwards, and announced as one of his party planks, as we would say nowadays, that the surplus arising from the sale of public lands should be divided among the States.

This proposition had long been considered, but while there was a heavy public debt it was academic only. Now that the public debt was paid off, or soon to be, it was evident that the surplus revenue must be disposed of in some fashion. Some statesmen wanted the tariff reduced, which, of course, did not suit Clay. Some, like Benton, wished enormous outlays for coast defenses. There was great difficulty in the minds of many on the subject. Some thought it unconstitutional to give the money to the States and extravagant to waste it on fortifications. It was only cupidity that made it possible, eventually, to get a majority for any proposition whatever.

Once, when Clay was making an impassioned speech, in which he declared that the distribution of the land surplus was a measure of the highest importance and was showing how the older States would profit by the plan, a Senator asked him to explain how it was that the newer States would benefit. Clay answered with scorn that they would benefit by having such an increased population that there would be Senators of experience elected by men able to buy the lands. There was no rejoinder.

Clay's first effort at land distribution in 1832 failed,

as Congress took no action whatever. In 1833 it was an essential part of the tariff compromise that the land distribution policy should accompany it, as this would give some compensation to the States where manufacturing was increasing. Jackson was glad enough to see the compromise bill pass, as he had no desire to send an army to South Carolina to fight, but he was utterly opposed to the land distribution act. He received both bills in his room at the Capitol within a few hours of the end of the session. Jackson sent Benton to learn whether a veto would be upheld if sent in at once. Benton found the situation so unpromising that Jackson neither signed nor vetoed the bill, but took no action whatever. This was the first "pocket veto" on record, and it created a sensation. Not only was the means employed declared revolutionary and unconstitutional, but Clay was enraged because it omitted an important part of the compromise. Clay even went so far as to insinuate that the bill was actually a law without the President's signature, as provided for by the Constitution, but no effort was ever made to enforce such a construction. It was not until 1836 that Clay found it possible to carry out his long-cherished plan. The surplus question was now an important one, as the treasury was overflowing, and so great were the sales of lands that in a few years the receipts equalled those in all previous years from the establishment of the government. In his first set speech on the subject made in 1833, when, as he claimed, he was cheated by Jackson, Clay made the following statement:

"Long after we shall cease to be agitated by the tariff, ages after our manufactures shall have acquired a stability and perfection, which will enable them successfully to cope with the manufactures of any other country, the public lands will remain a subject of deep and enduring interest."

Advantages of Distribution —

It settles forever a great & distracting question —

It settles it on no partial grounds but on a broad, equal, equitable, basis.

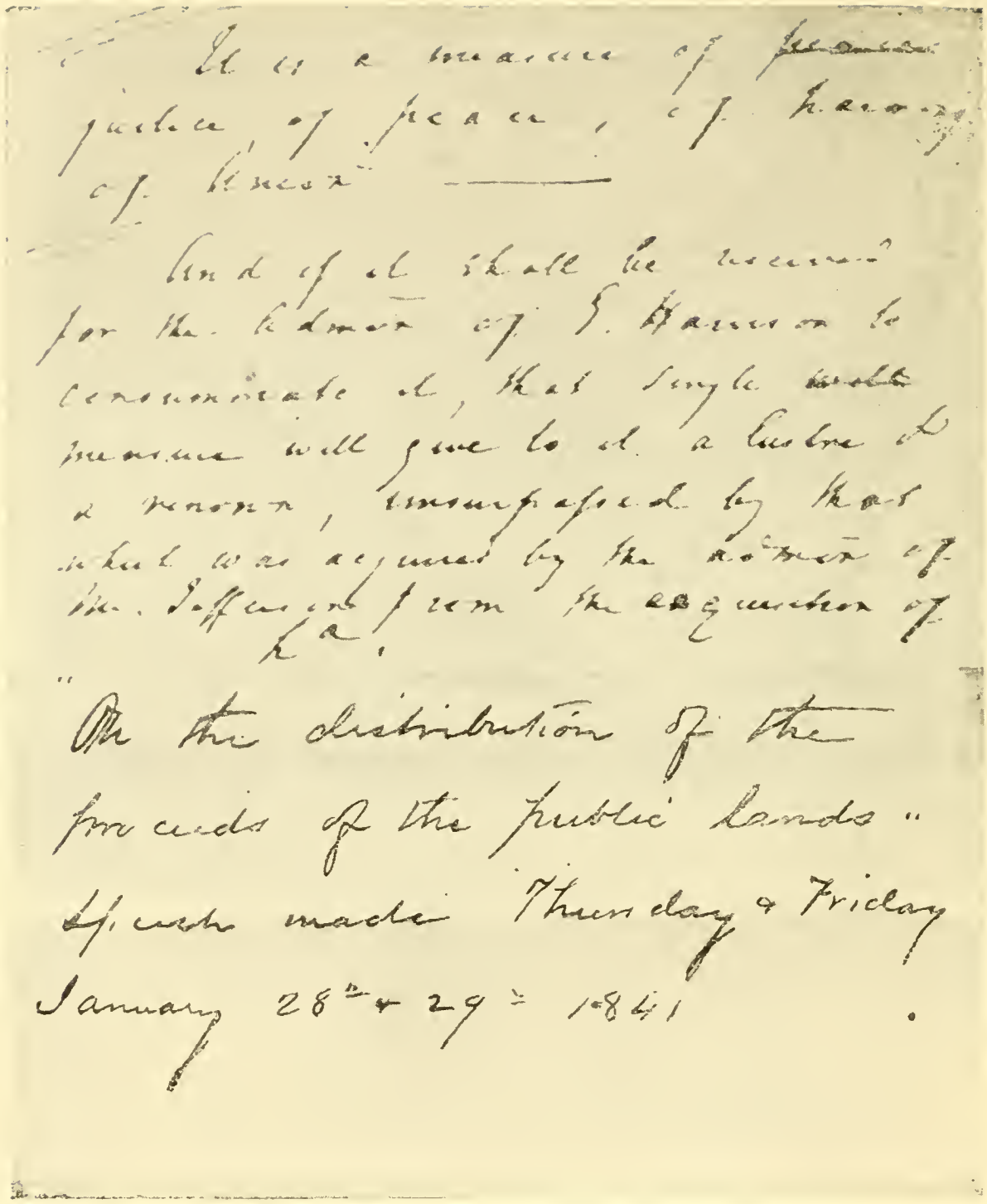
It retains the administration of this vast public domain under one controlling power, for the equal benefit of all the States.

It perpetuates the Union —

It is the Cestus snatched from Juno —

Ages will roll around, and here ~~at~~ from the common treasury of this great family of States will each member come to obtain his just distributive share.

When a State is formed at the mouth of Oregon, her representatives scaling the Rocky mountains, feeling through the country of the grizzly bear & the lingering savage, will descend the United Missouri, & present ~~[illegible]~~ themselves in the Capitol, conscious of their community of interest & of glory in this great Republic —



THIS IS THE ONLY MEMORANDUM IN EXISTENCE USED BY HENRY CLAY IN SPEAKING. ORDINARILY HE USED NO NOTES AT ALL. THE SPEECH TO WHICH THESE NOTES REFER WAS MADE IN THE SENATE JANUARY 28 AND 29, 1841

(Original in possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky. Photographed especially for this volume.)

It is evident that Clay had not the gift of prophecy. In this year (1904) there are few public lands left in the market which are available for agriculture, except by means of irrigation, while it cannot be claimed that the country has ceased to be agitated by the tariff. One of Clay's principal arguments in favor of the distribution was that it would cement the States closer together. In that day it was common to consider the Union an experiment, and secession or separation were continually talked of. Clay was for the Union, but he had frequent doubts as to whether it could be preserved, and was ever seeking plasters to heal up wounds. He said :

"If we appropriate, for a limited time, the proceeds of that great resource (the public lands) among the several States, for the important objects which have been enumerated, a new and powerful bond of affection and of interest will be added. The States will feel and recognize the operation of the general government, not merely in power and burdens, but in benefactions and blessings. And the general government in its turn will feel from the expenditure of money which it dispenses to the States, the benefits of moral and intellectual improvement of the people, of greater facility in social and commercial intercourse, and of the purification of the population of our country, themselves the best parental source of national character, national union and national greatness."

In other words Clay was going to bribe the States into contentment. That the distribution had no such effects as he predicted, is well known.

The antipathy between Clay and Jackson which reached its height about this time, and which had an issue in the question of land distribution, was one of the unpleasant features of life to Clay, for he had not desired nor deserved such treatment as he received. While Speaker, he met Jackson at a tavern in Tennessee, and approached with outstretched hand. Jackson brushed by with barely

a nod, because of the speech Clay had made on the Florida troubles. Afterwards Jackson sent friends to explain that the slight was because he "was suffering from an indisposition," but it did not mollify Clay until Jackson had made the *amende honorable* at the time he wanted Clay's support in 1825. Then he became bitter again, and for some unknown reason accused Clay of uttering scandals about his (Jackson's) dead wife. This was a calumny, for Clay was a knight errant towards women. Then Jackson accused Clay of circulating the scandals about Mrs. Eaton. In this he also was wrong. These scandals were notorious, and, of all men, Jackson was the last who should have made such a charge, as he had lived at the O'Neill tavern, and must have known that they were not manufactured for political purposes.

The result, however, was that Benton, who had the ear of Jackson, was able to keep back the land distribution act for years. The feud between these two on this issue became stronger when Clay said that Benton's plan was "a grant of the property of the whole people to a small part of the people." Jackson ordered that this be made a campaign slogan, but found he could not make it such when he had to sign the distribution bill to save Van Buren.

When he came to the final effort, in the winter of 1835–36, Clay still found much difficulty. There was scarcely a member who did not want the largess of the government, but there were so many who had taken ground on cognate subjects, in opposition to the principle, that they knew not what to do. One Senator is said to have approached Clay and asked how he could find a balm for his political conscience under the circumstances. Clay started to give his familiar arguments, but was stopped by the statement that the member only wanted some plea which

he could give for being inconsistent, as his re-election was at hand. Clay looked at him a moment and replied :

"Is it your constitutional view, or fear of defeat, that is troubling you?"

"I want to be re-elected," was the reply.

Said Clay :

"Your State is heavily in debt, and this bill will bring you over a million dollars. Don't you think that a man who can take home a million dollars has a better argument for re-election than if he produces a certificate that he has never changed his mind on any subject?"

The Senator voted for the bill.

Others could not be brought around in any such fashion, and for a long time the fate of the bill seemed doubtful. Clay's first set speech on the measure which he introduced was briefer than the former one, and did not go deeply into the particular merits of the controversy, except to laud the general advantage of giving the States so much money that everyone would necessarily be happy. At the close he indulged in the pathetic with little relevancy to the context. He said that this bill was not only dear to his heart, but he believed it was the most important ever offered for the preservation of the Union, and that its benefits would be incalculable. Once more he announced that he expected to retire from public life, and assured his hearers that he would carry with him no regrets and no reproaches, concluding as follows :

"When I look back on my humble origin, left an orphan too young to have been conscious of a father's smiles and caresses, with a widowed mother, surrounded by a numerous offspring, in the midst of pecuniary embarrassments, without a regular education, without fortune, without friends, without

patrons, I have reason to be satisfied with my public career. I ought to be thankful for the high places and honors to which I have been called by the favor and partiality of my countrymen, and I am thankful and grateful. And I shall take with me the pleasing consciousness that, in whatever station I have been placed, I have earnestly and honestly labored to justify their confidence by a faithful, zealous discharge of my public duties."

Here he once more exaggerated his early struggles, since no man ever had more friends and patrons in youth than he. But the recital is said to have been affecting, though it seems far removed from any connection with the public lands.

Gradually it was found that the bill could easily pass both Houses if only some way could be found to salve the consciences of the strict construction Democrats. It was found, and the trick was so apparent that it seems strange able men would be willing to deceive themselves by it, since no one else was for a moment in doubt. The trick was nothing less than that of authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to "deposit" with the various States all the money in the treasury above five million dollars, on the first of the year 1837, in four quarterly instalments. The bill provided that Congress might at any time recall the money, but it was considered a huge joke, as no State would have taken the money under such terms, and it was well known and openly asserted that Congress would never get a dollar back, not even if it should happen to ask for it.

This remarkable invention resulted in the passage of the bill by large majorities, Benton being its chief opponent in the Senate. Jackson was sorely perplexed when he received the measure. He considered it iniquitous and wanted to veto it, but was fearful that this would injure Van Buren's chances of election. He signed the bill, and is said to have

looked upon it as the sole regrettable act of his public career.

Clay's joy over this triumph was short lived. He was set aside as a candidate against Van Buren, and several favorite sons were put in nomination in the hope of throwing the contest into the House of Representatives once more. This failed, and Van Buren was triumphantly elected. The good luck of Jackson did not desert him. He paid the first instalment of about nine million five hundred thousand dollars in coin promptly, and went out of office unconscious of the approaching storm. When the first of April came round, the portents of evil were already apparent, but the payment was made in lawful money, though with considerable difficulty. The country was beginning to suffer from depression and the panic was at hand. Under such circumstances the withdrawal of nineteen millions of dollars had a bad effect on business, the more so because it did not readily get into the proper channels again. The third payment was made largely in State bank notes, including some of doubtful value, and the fourth was never made at all. The panic had burst upon the land, many of the banks which had Federal money failed, and, so far from being any surplus, there was soon not enough in the treasury for ordinary expenses.

The States received little benefit from this largess, and most of them were positively harmed. Largely as a result of this "deposit," some States entered upon a career of extravagance which in the end compelled them to repudiate their bonds. So far from "cementing national spirit," as Clay hoped, the result gave rise to innumerable quarrels, while American credit was injured abroad, and did not quickly revive. Some of the States gave the money to the various counties for improvements. Some

distributed it *pro rata* among the population. Others used it as the basis of an enormous expenditure for railways, canals, and turnpikes, which the government was expected to pay for. The crash came soon, but not until many enormous public works had been undertaken, only soon to be either abandoned entirely or cut down and postponed. Indeed, the result was as far as possible from what Clay had expected. It is true that it came at a critical time, and distribution might have been happier under other conditions ; but the bill was vicious in principle, and never could have been very satisfactory considering the cupidity of human nature and the tendency of the American to speculate wildly at every opportunity.

Notwithstanding the treasury was empty and the government had to borrow money, there was great wrath over the failure to pay the fourth instalment, and Clay was insistent that it be paid ; but this was for effect, since for years the government lived more or less on borrowed money.

When Clay came to the front as absolute Whig leader in the Tyler administration, he once more had distribution on his programme, but met with constant opposition. Finally, a compromise was effected by which there was to be no land surplus distribution until the average tariff duties were less than twenty per cent., something that has not yet occurred. Clay soon left the Senate, and bothered no more with the scheme which had seemed so dear to him. This was one of the greatest of the many disappointments of his career. The nearly thirty millions which were paid out still stand on the books of the government against the States, and undoubtedly could be called for at any time, and surely never will be.

Clay took calmly the bitter reproaches heaped on

him. He felt that he had failed under peculiar circumstances, and that Jackson was responsible for it because of the veto of the bank and the issuance of the Specie Circular. Nothing is more astonishing in our whole history than the way in which these two men came into constant conflict, with Clay almost invariably the loser. In equipment, Clay was in almost every respect Jackson's superior. The latter had one quality that Clay did not possess, that of unalterable determination. It would be idle to say that Clay had not his bad points and Jackson his good ones. It would be difficult to make a proper comparison between the two men as statesmen that would be just. The fact is that Clay's career was one long series of public and private disappointments, while Jackson's was a train of successes. One can only wish that the good qualities of both could have been combined in one. There would have been a statesman, indeed!

Of cognate interest is Clay's position with regard to the Indians and their lands. At a time when many statesmen, and a majority of legislators, seemed to think the aborigine was lawful prey of the white man, Clay stands out prominently as an advocate of securing to the Indian every right in land and location and treaty stipulation that was possible. It can be said that in every piece of legislation affecting them, Clay took advanced ground along with Benton. These two great representatives of the West felt that there was such a difference between the civilizations of the Caucasian and red races that an adjustment was entirely improbable, that the weaker race was likely to succumb to the stronger. Indeed, they were more pessimistic than the facts or subsequent history justified. It seems likely that Clay had more sentiment in the matter than the occasion warranted, but it is to his credit

that he was ever anxious to secure to the Indians as many rights and privileges as possible. In his day the tribes West of the Missouri roamed the prairies unharmed. He was principally concerned with the Southern Indians, which have since become the Five Civilized Nations, and the Seminoles, who waged the longest war against this government. Clay wanted essential justice done. He demanded lands and compensation for the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, along with their allies, and was prominent and energetic in securing for them a location in the present Indian Territory, although at that time it seemed about as far distant as does now Alaska.

Clay's connection with Texas, although it does not specifically belong in a consideration of the question of the public lands, has a connection with that issue which cannot be ignored. Like most of the young Republicans of the early part of the century, Clay was disgusted over the failure of the administration to secure Texas at the time of the treaty with Spain that secured us the Floridas. Monroe was President at the time, and the younger Adams, Secretary of State. The latter had secured from Spain a grant of a large part of what was then called Texas, though it included less than the present State, and he might have secured a good deal more. It was not the virtuous, slavery-hating Adams who cut down this offer, but the Virginia slave-holder, Monroe, who had already noted with apprehension that New England statesmen viewed with distrust the encroaching political power of the West. It is doubtful if the moral status of slavery entered largely into the matter, but the old Federalists had made so many threats during the war of 1812 and at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, that Monroe was minded to be cautious, and actually refused much of the soil that was offered. His Cabinet finally agreed with him to

a man, and that Cabinet included Calhoun, who was accused later, while Secretary of State, of abstracting the papers filed there, so that his own record would not stand against him.

Clay was no sooner warm in his seat in the Cabinet under Adams than he made an effort to purchase Texas from Mexico, but this proved abortive. Then came the series of filibustering expeditions and the "independence" movement which were conducted by Austin, Rusk, and Houston, and resulted in a temporary defeat of the Mexicans. If there had been any sort of administrative power in Mexico, the movement would have been short-lived, but the alleged republic raised more revolutions than anything else. Though the war was nominally kept up, by the early thirties there was still a semblance of government. The massacre of the Alamo had been retrieved and avenged by the battle of San Jacinto, and there were those in this country who moved at once for annexation. As this was premature, and as Texas had not made the request, it proved a failure. Calhoun had set his mind on the annexation because it seemed to afford a chance for a number of new slave States, whereby his theory of preserving the numerical balance between the two sections could be preserved. When it came to details, he found the task difficult, and it was abandoned for the time. When Texas did apply for admission, the situation was by no means clear. Independence seemed to be largely on paper, and Mexico sent a warning that anything savoring of annexation would mean war. The application was refused by the vote of a large number of Southern men, who felt that Calhoun was driving them too fast. Clay opposed annexation at this time.

Eventually, the subject came up in the last weeks of the Tyler administration, and it was felt that some-

thing must be done. It was almost the end of the session when the House and the Senate came into collision on the subject. Calhoun was Secretary of State, and the House had followed his lead by passing a bill which provided for annexation through the passage of a simple act and the despatch of a commissioner to Texas to arrange the ratification. The Senate would not agree to this, but passed a bill looking to a negotiation with Mexico, rightly holding that this was too serious a subject to be decided without consideration of her rights. Calhoun believed there would be no war, but had a notion that he could buy Texas through an intrigue he had conducted with Santa Anna, the ofttime dictator of Mexico, now in retirement in Cuba. At this juncture, Benton, who managed to control the situation, was approached (Clay having left the Senate), and the suggestion was made to him that the two bills be united so as to give the President his choice as to a course of action. Benton demurred, but as only three days were left to take some action, he went to see Polk, who was in town waiting for his inauguration, and that statesman said he would be glad to adopt the Senate horn of the dilemma and would select the best men in the country from all parties to conduct the negotiation. The bill passed, was signed by the President (Tyler), who, in defiance of the intent of the law and against the wishes of nearly every man in Congress, sent off a commissioner at midnight, in the midst of a driving storm, to accomplish the annexation at the time when Polk was making up his commission. Texas came in with war. Clay, who opposed the annexation, but perforce supported the war in his great market-house speech at Lexington, expressed his views on the subject. He had been defeated for the Presidency before annexation took place and wanted to be President in 1848, but the

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HENRY CLAY, JR.

(Killed at the battle of Buena Vista. This son resembled his father in many respects, and alone seemed likely to follow in his footsteps. Original at Ashland. Photographed especially for this volume.)

stars in their courses fought against him. If he had not meddled with the Texas question in 1844, he would have been elected. If he had stood by the Raleigh letter, he would have been elected. Because he tried to please antagonistic factions in the North and the South, he failed.

One incident in Clay's career here deserves especial mention, because in some degree it opened his eyes to the essential fallacy of a compromise between that which is right and that which seems expedient. In 1835–36 there was much indignation among the conservative politicians over the action of the abolitionists in their constant appeals for the wiping out of slavery. The men who were back of this movement, as a rule, were of unimpeachable moral character. Benjamin Lundy had started early in the century at Knoxville, Tennessee, an abolition newspaper, which was in reality a successor to an earlier one published by Moses Embree, a Quaker, who in the heart of the slavery region wrote fearlessly and without opposition views that a generation later were not tolerated. Lundy moved the paper East, and was succeeded by Garrison, who was temperamentally unfitted to get along with men, but whose views on slavery were uncompromising. Birney was a much better balanced man, and was more forceful among the slave-holders in bringing to their minds a correct view of the nature of the institution. But Garrison was radical and rabid to a degree that was to be explained only on the ground that he proposed to fight the devil with fire. He had around him a coterie of men who damned the Constitution as a compact with hell, and made other statements which angered the conservatives and led to the Boston riots, in which the most eminent men were against the fiery editor.

Nothing but the righteousness of his cause saved Garrison, who was one of the least diplomatic of men, and who had many things about him which repelled those who were as earnest as he in securing abolition. There were two wings of the abolitionists, and it is probable that the radical one in the end was the more effective in stirring up agitation and arousing an enlightened public opinion. As the abolition press grew and increased its virulence, it attracted attention, and by the time Calhoun had become the leader of the slave-holding oligarchy in the South, almost all Southerners, and not a few in the North, felt that something ought to be done to curb "incendiary" editors. But it was difficult to decide on any course of action. Petitions for abolition were sent to the House and Senate in increasing numbers. Clay, who at first wished these to have respectful attention, even when the prayer was denied, now began to grow tired, and they were treated with less ceremony.

A crisis came when the Postmaster-General refused to deliver certain abolition newspapers sent to the South. He had no right to this position, and the subject was brought before Congress. Calhoun had figured out a curious course of action which seemed to him at once constitutional and feasible. It was that the postmaster at the point of destination should refuse to deliver any newspapers which were illegal documents under the laws of the State, and at the same time should advertise the fact so that the addressees could have the newspapers returned. In some States it was a crime to have in one's possession the more radical antislavery organs, and Calhoun believed that the postmaster was the best sort of censor under the circumstances. Clay had as little love for the abolitionists as Calhoun, but he saw that such a law would be ridiculous and not

only unconstitutional, but sure to provoke much more trouble than the mere circulation of the newspapers. He spoke against the bill, and in the angry colloquy that followed, Calhoun accused him of having been on his back in 1833. Calhoun's bill was lost.

Legislation on the subject of slavery became more and more difficult. Northern opinion developed into a definite view that the institution was a moral evil and must be curbed whenever possible, and the Southern statesmen conceived the notion that it was a national institution which penetrated every portion of the Federal territory by virtue of the Constitution, as Taney laid down many years later.

In all his dealings with the subject Clay, anxious for an amelioration of the condition of the slave, objected to the extension of slavery, but tried his best to keep the subject entirely out of politics, something that he could not possibly achieve, since politics was coming more and more to revolve around the subject, which soon was to be the vital issue between the great parties.

In 1841, when the land bill was one of the principal measures under discussion, Clay and King, of Alabama, came into violent discussion, and the lie was passed. Both men were at fever heat and retired to committee rooms, where it was decided that this was a case for a duel. Preparations were actually under way when cooler heads interposed, and it was resolved that an accommodation must be made. Clay recovered his senses quickest of all. He walked back into the Senate chamber and approached King in apparently the most casual manner, and in most friendly language said, "I say, King, let me have a pinch of snuff, will you?"

The incident closed at once.

XXIII

PARTY DICTATOR

When, during the first Whig administration, the nomination of Edward Everett to the important mission to Great Britain was announced, there was considerable opposition to his confirmation, because he had endorsed the petition of those who wanted to have slavery abolished in the District of Columbia, saying that it was competent for Congress to do so. The opponents of the petition urged that it meant that the Union would be dissolved. At this Clay rose to his full height, and with a gleam of fire in his eyes, announced: "If his nomination is rejected for the reasons given by the gentleman (King, of Alabama), this Union is dissolved already."

The nomination was confirmed without further trouble.

Although Clay always resented with much warmth the assertion that he was a party dictator, no man in our history ever so completely justified that term in a legitimate sense. He entered public life as a warm Jeffersonian Democrat, but soon found the situation required less philosophy and more action. He forced the war of 1812, and up to the time he left the House, in 1825, to enter Adams' cabinet, he was the leader in all legislation. Always liberal to the opposition in making up committees, he nevertheless had matters generally in complete control, and though masterful—at times imperious—it was always in that winning manner that left behind it not the slightest tinge of humiliation. Members used to complain that Jackson compelled them with whips

and scorpions to obey his wishes, and they obeyed, while resenting. Clay was followed without questioning and, as a rule, without murmuring.

It was not until Clay came to the Senate, in 1831, that party lines began to be drawn anew. The Federalists were gone, and the National Republicans, under the leadership of John Quincy Adams, had made a bad showing. The situation now reverted to individuals. For years men were for Clay or Jackson, and party names counted for little or nothing. When Clay made his own programme, in 1831–32, there were those who doubted the wisdom of some of his ideas, but they did not openly dispute them. By means of his alliance with Calhoun and Webster, Clay managed to get nearly everything he wanted through Congress, although, at the last, defeated by Jackson. In 1833, there were a number of his former followers who insisted that he was wrong in making the compromise on the tariff, but Clay held the leash so tight that of his former supporters Webster, alone, refused to follow him, and this refusal caused an estrangement which lasted for years.

The most astonishing feature of Clay's career was his ability to combine diverse interests in behalf of his legislation. This was partly because he had a persuasive manner in private speech, as well as on the floor of the Senate; partly because he assumed leadership at a time when members wanted a leader and were willing to take any man who showed capacity; but most of all because of that peculiar personal magnetism which he exercised over all with whom he came in contact. During Jackson's two terms he held his forces in order as well as possible, but it was impossible to secure any party legislation in opposition to Old Hickory. During Van Buren's term, the hard times made it possible for Clay to set

his forces in order, though only such remedial legislation as was absolutely imperative was passed. Considering that for thirty years he had been most of the time in public life, had practically erected the Whig party on his own platform, had led the fight against Jackson, and taken more blows than all the rest, Clay assumed that he would be nominated for the Presidency. Even in the victory of the Whig party he found some consolation.

In the elections of 1840 the Whigs had been uniformly successful. Clay could count up a majority of seven in the Senate and about fifty in the House, which was ample. Harrison desired that Clay become Secretary of State, but the post was refused. Clay must have winced at the mere offer of a place connected with the bitterest experiences of his life. He desired to remain in the Senate, where his programme could be carried out, and he was so masterful that he prevented Harrison from appointing Webster Secretary of the Treasury, as was desired by both. Clay said he would denounce the appointment on the floor of the Senate and prevent confirmation if he could. So Webster was made Secretary of State, and Clay prepared his programme at Ashland for the coming winter. Thirty days passed, and for the first time in this country's history death struck down the Chief Magistrate. Tyler hastened to Washington and assumed the office in all its completeness, though there was some effort to call him simply "acting President."

The hearts of the Whigs fell when they learned of the change which had taken place. Harrison was a good natured old gentleman, who would have permitted Clay to do pretty much as he pleased. Tyler was of a different stamp. He was a strict constructionist of the old school, and it is certain he never would have been nominated had there been

ASHLAND AS IT IS TO-DAY

(Now owned by Mrs. H. C. McDowell, a granddaughter of Henry Clay. From a photograph taken for this volume.)

the slightest notion that he would reach the Presidency. Clay felt the situation keenly. He knew Tyler so well that he had doubts as to his being a good Whig on some points, and he wrote a letter calculated to draw him out on the bank and other questions. To this Tyler replied rather equivocally, though he seemed to think some sort of a constitutional bank or fiscal agency could be erected to carry on the necessary business of the government. Whether Clay deceived himself, or was later so angered that he was willing to do anything to "crucify Tyler," is not certain. He always asserted that Tyler was professedly a good Whig, so far as his letter indicated.

In the fall of 1841 Clay came to Washington prepared to conduct the business of the Whig party and the government without advice or consultation. That he expected to dominate the President seems also likely. When Congress was at last in session he opened his programme, which consisted of the following important items :

A new tariff bill.

A national bank.

A land distribution act.

The first involved a repeal of the sub-treasury system, which had been established under Van Buren, and was accomplished without a great deal of trouble, only to be re-established at a later date. The tariff bill was necessary, because the revenues were now so small that the government had to borrow money to conduct the administration of affairs even on an economical basis. Manufacturers were clamoring for protection, and Clay had to admit that he had been mistaken in supposing that by 1842 there would be no more necessity for such government support.

The national bank was a cardinal Whig doctrine,

and Clay was anxious to have a new one established, not only because he considered it essential, but also because he wanted a vindication of his policy during the many years he had fought for the Biddle institution. The land distribution act he considered, perhaps, the most essential of all the measures, in spite of the fact that the first effort in that line had been so disastrous. For the rest he decided that only necessary appropriation bills should be passed and a bill to make loans which were essential owing to the condition of the treasury.

When he unfolded this programme he found he had omitted one feature which it was necessary to insert in order to secure the adhesion of sufficient members. This was a national bankrupt law, which was asked for because of the conditions arising out of the panic and subsequent years of depression. Clay accepted this necessity with ill grace, and the law was passed and worked so outrageously that it was speedily repealed. Tyler was already planning for a party coup. He wanted to be rid of his Cabinet, so that he could rally friends of his own around him; but it is difficult to see how a man, who had the abilities of Tyler, could have been so artfully played upon by friends who were not Whigs. The demon of ambition had entered his being and seems to have destroyed his mental balance. For a time he halted between two courses, but finally cast the die in favor of apostasy, and went as far as possible in his efforts to destroy the Whig party.

On the night following the reception of the second bank veto, the members of the Cabinet, except Webster, met with Clay to consult upon the situation. They agreed to resign, and did so in a body, writing letters in which Tyler was accused of apostasy, of lying, and nearly all other political crimes.

The resignations were necessary to save the party and themselves. Already it had been discovered by members of the Cabinet that to get news of the administration they must read the *New York Herald,* which had sources of information which they traced directly to the White House. When an article appeared in that newspaper asking the members why they remained where they were not wanted, the crisis was reached, and the veto gave them the opportunity they sought.

Next day the members handed in their resignations at a meeting of the Cabinet. Webster alone remained, and he was much perturbed in spirit. He did not wish to resign, and was angered that Clay should have taken upon himself the complete leadership of the party, for Webster had long thirsted for the Presidency, and was tired of playing second. After the other members had left the room, he turned to Tyler.

"Where am I to go, Mr. President?" he said.

"You must decide that for yourself, Mr. Webster," Tyler answered.

"If you leave it to me, Mr. President, I will stay where I am."

This so pleased Tyler that he grasped Webster's hand warmly. "Give me your hand upon that," he said; "and now I will say to you that Henry Clay is a doomed man from this hour."

That Tyler should have wanted to doom Clay to political destruction is surprising enough, but the means which he took to accomplish his purpose show that he had little knowledge of human nature in politics.

Clay was by this time a chained tiger. He had seen almost all of his programme shattered. He had succeeded in getting a tariff bill, but it was not what he wanted, and to secure it at all he had been

obliged to sacrifice the land surplus distribution act. All that he had accomplished in the entire session was a bankrupt act that was vicious and a tariff bill that was unsatisfactory. Now, he saw that it was to be a duel to the death between Tyler and himself, and, as he was the unanimous choice of the party for the nomination in 1844, he used more circumspection than in the contest of 1832. He expended his best efforts upon the building up of the Whig party and upon closing the ranks for the coming struggle. He was far from being a "doomed man," and Tyler's attitude does not seem to have hurt him or the Whig party, though it is true that much indignation was expressed over Webster's course in remaining in the Cabinet. Webster himself declared that it was to complete the treaty with Great Britain, but he found that he was in an uncongenial atmosphere and got out as soon as possible.

Clay, now sixty-five years old, had resolved to make his next canvass as a private citizen. He had sent his resignation to the governor, and when the credentials of his successor arrived, he seized an early opportunity to present them and make the "Farewell Speech," which was one of the most remarkable ever delivered in the Senate. Notice of his intentions had spread, and the galleries were crowded.

Clay was at his best, and realized a triumph. In his farewell he reviewed his career in brief, besought forgiveness of his enemies, and in a burst of emotional eloquence brought tears to every eye. The speech is one that reads well to this day, and it must have fallen grandly from the lips of the old man, who, tall and straight as a pine, yet quivering with emotion, spoke the words which made every Senator believe that a truly great man was departing out of Israel.

Speaking of his early career and the manner in which Kentucky had adopted and honored him, Clay said :

"But scarce had I set my foot on her [Kentucky's] generous soil, when I was embraced with parental fondness, caressed as though I had been a favorite child, and patronized with liberal and unbounded munificence. From that period the highest honors of the State have been freely bestowed on me ; and when, in the darkest hour of calumny and detraction, I seemed to be assailed by all the rest of the world, she interposed her broad and impenetrable shield, repelled the poisoned shafts which were aimed for my destruction, and vindicated my good name from every malignant and unfounded aspersion. I return with indescribable pleasure to linger a while longer, and mingle with the warm-hearted and whole-souled people of that State ; and, when the last scene shall forever close upon me, I hope that my earthly remains will be laid under the green sod with those of her gallant and patriotic sons.

"I am held up to the country as a dictator. A dictator ! The idea of a dictatorship is drawn from Roman institutions ; and at the time the office was created, the person who wielded the tremendous weight of authority it conferred concentrated in his own person an absolute power over the lives and property of all his fellow-citizens : he could levy armies ; he could build and man navies ; he could raise any amount of revenue he might choose to demand ; and life and death rested on his fiat. If I were a dictator, as I am said to be, where is the power with which I am clothed ? Have I any army, any navy, any revenue, any patronge ; in a word, any power whatever ? If I have been a dictator, I think that even those who have the most freely applied to me the appellation must be compelled to make due admission ; first, that my dictatorship has been distinguished by no cruel executions, stained by no blood, sullied by no act of dishonor ; and I think they must also own that if I did usurp the power of a dictator, I at least voluntarily surrendered it within a shorter period than was allotted for the duration of the dictatorship of the Roman commonwealth.

"That my nature is warm, my temper ardent, my disposition, especially in relation to the public service, enthusiastic, I am ready to own ; and those who suppose that I have been assuming the dictatorship, have only mistaken for arrogance or assumption that ardor and devotion which are

natural to my constitution, and which I may have displayed with too little regard to cold, calculating, and cautious prudence in sustaining and zealously supporting important national measures of policy which I presented and espoused.

"In the course of a long and arduous public service, especially during the last eleven years in which I have held a seat in the Senate, from the same ardor and enthusiasm of character, I have no doubt, in the heat of debate, and in an honest endeavor to maintain my opinions against adverse opinions alike honestly entertained, as to the best course to be adopted for the public welfare, I may have often inadvertently and unintentionally, in moments of excited debate, made use of language that has been offensive and susceptible of injurious interpretation towards my brother Senators. If there be any here who retain wounded feelings of injury or dissatisfaction, produced on such occasions, I beg to assure them that I now offer the most ample apology for any departure on my part from the established rules of parliamentary decorum and courtesy. On the other hand, I assure Senators, one and all, without exception, and without reserve, that I retire from this chamber without carrying with me a single feeling of resentment or dissatisfaction to the Senate or any of its members. I go from this place under the hope that we shall mutually consign to perpetual oblivion whatever personal collisions may at any time unfortunately have occurred between us; and that our recollections shall dwell in future only on those conflicts of mind with mind, and those intellectual struggles, those noble exhibitions of the power of logic, argument, and eloquence, honorable to the Senate and to the nation, in which each has sought and contended for what he deemed the best mode of accomplishing one common object,—the interest and the most happiness of our beloved country. To these thrilling and delightful scenes it will be my pleasure and my pride to look back in my retirement with unmeasured satisfaction.

"May the most precious blessings of Heaven rest upon the whole Senate and each member of it, and may the labors of every one redound to the benefit of the nation and to the advancement of his own fame and renown. And when you shall retire to the bosom of your constituents, may you receive the most cheering and gratifying of all human rewards, their cordial greeting of 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

"And now, Mr. President and Senators, I bid you all a long, a lasting, and a friendly farewell."

Upon the conclusion of the speech, the Senate found itself unable to do business and immediately adjourned.

Later, in another and longer speech made at Lexington to an immense assemblage of his former constituents, Clay went over his whole career, apologizing for his errors, and explaining his conduct in a way that wrought his hearers up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

Surely there was a heart in Henry Clay such as few public men have possessed, and for his efforts to carry out his policy, whenever he was bitter, he may be forgiven. He loved much. Though this Senate speech was given as a farewell there were ten years left him, much of which time he spent in public life and always in the public eye. He was the sort of man to whom no State could afford to grant a private life, and Kentucky honored herself more than she did him in the constant manifestations of affection and tributes of honor which she showered upon him.

The longest period of retirement which Clay enjoyed from the time he was twenty-five until the end of his life was after this farewell which he meant to be permanent. Six years after its delivery he was recalled to the scene of action, and died in the harness. The interim was not one of repose. He made one Presidential canvass and one for the nomination in 1848. He was constantly called upon to make tours, or to write letters, or deliver speeches, and during the time mentioned he was, perhaps, as active as at any other period of his life. At times he had no other ambition than to live at Ashland, ponder on events, and pace up and down the path on his estate, which was known then and now as "Clay's Walk." At other times the fire of ambition was in his soul. There is no doubt that in 1844,

almost up to the last moment, he fully expected to be elected. On other occasions he had been sanguine only at the beginning of the canvass. There was but one reason why he did not succeed in 1844, and that was his fatal habit of explaining and defending and apologizing for things that he should have treated with silence. He spent one winter in New Orleans with great benefit to his health. At the races many of his horses won, which pleased him greatly.

One day during the campaign he was racing some horses on his mile track at Ashland for the benefit of visitors. There was one lively colt that seemed the fastest on the track and was held in high esteem. At a particular trial one of the friends named this colt Clay, while in a spirit of jest another guest named an apparently inferior horse Polk. To the surprise and consternation of all concerned Polk came in ahead. It is said that the incident affected Clay considerably, though he was not superstitious.

The race-course which still exists and on which the descendants of these horses are regularly exercised was a famous meeting-place for horsemen in the neighborhood. People came from far and near to see the horses exercise, and were entertained by Clay in his best fashion. He was out of debt at the time, thanks to many of his friends in Pennsylvania, and he enjoyed the rural delights as much as any man, though he was in constant correspondence with political leaders. After the defeat in 1844, he felt that the country had so far rejected him that he made the earnest resolve, at the request of his wife, never to go into politics again. One of his grandchildren relates that from that time on he lost the austerity which he had exhibited on occasions. He was becoming mellowed as befitted a man almost seventy years of age, and he assumed the air of a

patriarch. He would visit the cabins of his slaves and see that every want was attended to, would look at each animal on the place, from chickens to thoroughbreds, and would go into the town to dine friends at the Phœnix Hotel.

After his market-house speech, which was a bid for the Presidency, he waited for the call of the country, and when it did not come he accepted the result with true composure. He was a member of a church, and was exceedingly faithful to all the duties imposed.

There are many of the present generation who do not understand the system, which so long prevailed in this country, of men waiting until almost the end of their lives before "making peace with God," as the expression is. It may appear that this was a cowardly act, a sort of serving the devil until the last, and then getting in under cover when the last trump was about to sound. But this was far from being the case. The religious spirit of that age was a species of perfectionism, which was an outgrowth of the Reformation. It was held that a man must not enter the church formally until he had passed through fiery trials and was willing to devote himself exclusively to good works and to a sort of abnegation in imitation of the saints. This feeling prevailed in New England and elsewhere as a result of the doctrinal spirit of the times. Man, through the fall of Adam, had been consigned to perdition, and there was no hope for him except through the appeasing of a God who was angry with the wicked every day. Redemption was a matter of grace that was carefully exercised, and by no means liberally. Many works, it was believed, must accompany faith; the ordinary round of tasks as exercised by the majority was inconsistent with a religious life.

This notion has passed away, but it accounts for

many acts that are otherwise inexplicable. Clay, who could not in his earlier years have complied with the exactions of the church, was willing in his old age to become "reconciled to God," after the prevailing fashion, and loyally did he adhere to Christian duty as was then expounded. In 1849, much against his better inclinations, he heeded the call to appear as a peace-maker in the nation, and bowed by the weight of years accepted the duty. A most melancholy experience he had until the end.

There is no more pathetic picture in history than that of the old man called as the physician to write prescriptions for ills which could not be assuaged except in blood. Clay was no surgeon. He was an eclectic physician, who believed in the use of political hypnotism, of palliatives, of sedatives, and almost of anesthetics, to make things which were not equal to the same thing apparently equal each other.

XXIV

THE COMPROMISES OF 1850

When Clay obeyed the voice of Kentucky and for the last time entered the Senate, he was old and feeble. At seventy-three he was bent, and a troublesome cough racked him day and night, but he was cheerful, and at times seemed to renew his youth. The session of 1849–50 was one of the most memorable in history, and Clay was its moving spirit. He arrived after the session had begun, and at first seemed to take little interest in the proceedings. He walked slowly, and had to be assisted up and down the marble steps of the capitol. In the Senate he long kept his peace, but all eyes were upon him. It was felt that he, alone, of all men, was able to heal the wounds of the republic. And surely, if legislation were to accomplish the desired end, the physicians present seemed to be all that nature could provide. It was the most remarkable legislative body that ever sat in America. It seemed as if the country had been drained of its talent to meet the exigencies of the occasion.

Here once more the Triumvirate sat, and for the last time. Passing years had assuaged the bitterness of early rivalries, and they were once more friends. Clay was the oldest of the three, and even he had not completely thrown away ambition. Though he protested he could not be thought of as a candidate for 1852, there were times when the tempter was at his ear. Webster alone was openly ambitious. He was younger and more vig-

orous than Clay, though soon to pass away. Calhoun was tottering on the brink of the grave, his intellect still undimmed, and his belief in nullification still so strong that he wanted it engraved on his tombstone. The three men were, however, ghosts of the past. They managed to secure some alleged compromises, but they had outlived their times. Younger men educated by them were coming on the field and were to give a new trend to politics.

Oldest in point of service was Benton, just rejected by Missouri after a service of thirty years, because he would not bow the knee to the slave-holding oligarchy. Intellectually inferior to any of the Triumvirate, he was their superior in strength of purpose and clearness of vision. He had fought compromise all his life, was unqualifiedly for the Union, and hated Calhoun's theory of nullification with a perfect hatred. He had sacrificed his seat rather than yield his views on slavery, and was now enacting his last rôle. Curiously enough, he was the leading spokesman of the Whig administration, while Clay and Webster fought it bitterly. Dogmatic, imperious, incorruptible, Benton was soon to pass from a stage where he had acted so long and so honorably.

These were the four leaders of the Senate ; but there was another group of tried statesmen of large experience and much vision. Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, was just entering upon his national career that was to last for many years, but was already highly esteemed. Hale, of New Hampshire, was soon to be a free-soil candidate for the Presidency. John Davis, of Massachusetts, little known to the present generation, his glory seeming to be dimmed by Webster, was one of the most useful statesmen New England ever sent to Washington, and accom-

plished much more in legislation than his colleague, whom it was customary to call the "godlike." The senior Senator from New York was Daniel S. Dickinson, destined to a later and greater fame. New Jersey was represented by William L. Dayton, the first Republican candidate for Vice-President. Virginia sent Robert M. T. Hunter and James M. Mason, who became prominent in the Confederacy. Mangum and Badger, of North Carolina, were two strong statesmen from the South. Calhoun's colleague was that A. P. Butler whom Sumner attacked so viciously that Butler's nephew, Brooks, replied with a cane. Clay's colleague was Joseph R. Underwood, a man of many abilities. Tennessee was represented by another coming Presidential candidate, John Bell. Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, was one of the strongest men the country has produced, and might have been President except for his fatal gift of humor. His associate was Salmon P. Chase, the coming Chief-Justice. Clemens and King, of Alabama, the latter soon to be chosen Vice-President and die without taking office; Atchison, of Missouri, who led the border war in Kansas; Lewis Cass, perpetual candidate for the Presidency; Sam Houston, of Texas, who had been a corporal in Benton's regiment, and who fought compromise to the last; the Dodges, father and son, from Wisconsin and Iowa; and Jones, of Iowa,—these were some of the men of ability who sat together.

But there were three young men who were destined soon to take the lead in politics, and to dominate the policies of parties, and make more history than the Triumvirate. Jefferson Davis was home from the Mexican war and was the disciple of Calhoun, but a greater force than his teacher. Davis hooted at nullification as an impossibility. He accepted Calhoun's argument, and substituted for his conclu-

sion that of secession. He made not the slightest concealment of his purpose. A later generation has a distorted idea of Jefferson Davis, due to animosities growing out of the Civil War. At this time Davis was highly esteemed by all members of the Senate, was courtly in his deportment, and on several occasions was called upon to make an accommodation between fiery spirits of various factions. Later, he made an excellent Secretary of War, and, when the time for secession came, he went into it willingly, and was one of the few who believed truly there was to be a long and bloody war. Whatever verdict history will place on the career of Davis, it can never be said that he practised deception. He had sat at the feet of Calhoun, but he had the courage to act where the other had only the thought.

Stephen A. Douglas, then known as the "Little Giant," had been in public life some years, but was just advancing to leadership. He was a forceful speaker, though not so dignified as the Senate preferred, was ambitious of the Presidency, and courageous enough to take an unpopular side if it were to inhere to his ultimate political advantage. For ten years he was to be prominent in the councils of the Democracy, was to become subservient to the slave-holding section up to the very last concession, and, on that last point of issue, was to split the party and make possible the election of his old rival, Abraham Lincoln, the greatest disciple of Henry Clay. In the present session, Douglas did not figure much on the floor, but was active in committee and cloak room.

The last of this coterie was the youthful ex-governor of New York, William H. Seward, who alone at this time seems to have had a prevision of coming events. He was a free-soiler and more. He

was to shock the Senate very soon by his "Higher Law" doctrine, and was to live to see it maintained in blood, with himself as one of the chiefs of the administration of Lincoln.

To these should, perhaps, be added Salmon P. Chase, who, with all his great abilities, had so many failings due to untrammelled ambition. The House contained many other brilliant men; but, as most of the talent in the nation seemed to be in the Senate, it was impossible that the lower branch should shine by comparison. Nevertheless, there were men there already famous, and others soon to become renowned. Horace Mann and Robert Winthrop, of Massachusetts; Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania, who was to exercise a power over Congress only comparable to that which Clay had wielded for so many years, and David Wilmot, of "Proviso" fame, also of Pennsylvania; Robert M. McLane, of Maryland; James A. Seddon, of Virginia; James L. Orr, of South Carolina; Howell Cobb, Alexander H. Stephens, and Robert Toombs, of Georgia; Joshua R. Giddings, in a sense the successor of John Quincy Adams; Robert C. Schenck, of poker fame, of Ohio; Andrew Johnson, of Tennessee, to become President when Lincoln died; George W. Julian and Joseph E. McDonald, of Indiana; Edward D. Baker, of Illinois, the bosom friend of Lincoln, soon to fall in the Civil War; John A. McClernand, destined to fame as a warrior, and "Long John" Wentworth, also of Illinois. Altogether there were a dozen men in the Houses who had been or were to be candidates for national nominations, some of whom were to succeed, but most of them to fail.

The nation was very sick, indeed, and there were many who believed it beyond all recovery. It is difficult at this day to appreciate how critical was the situation. After the causes are plainly stated,

in the light of subsequent events, it seems as if there were no cause for alarm. A nation that survived the Civil War ought not to have been alarmed at the uproar over slavery extension. But it must be remembered that the war had not then been fought, and it was not certain at that moment whether, if secession were entered upon, the nation would have contested it with vigor. It is common to state that the ten years from 1850 to 1860 were necessary to educate the North to the point of resistance. It is idle to speculate on what might have happened. The situation in 1850 was this :

The Mexican war, brought on by the duplicity of Calhoun and Tyler for the express purpose of slavery extension, had ended in enormous additions to our territory. In California had been discovered more gold than had ever before been known in a single locality. New Mexico (then including Arizona) was an immense territory where several slave States might be made, and Texas, by its Constitution and the terms of admission, might resolve itself into five commonwealths, if it chose. The Mexican War had been fought almost entirely by Southern officers and largely by Southern volunteers. It was an unholy war upon a friendly nation for the purpose of ravishment.

Under such circumstances it was natural that the Southern people should expect most of the spoil, or at least a large share of it. To their intense indignation they discovered that the war had been practically in vain, so far as the extension of slavery was concerned. President Taylor had sent agents to New Mexico and California, urging them to adopt Constitutions and apply for statehood. It was found there was scarcely a corporal's guard of Americans in New Mexico, that the country was so unproductive there was little chance of making a State from

it in many years, and that slavery was not likely to flourish there under any circumstances. This was a disappointment, but when the Californians met and formed a Constitution in which slavery was excluded by all but a unanimous vote, the Calhoun faction was in a rage. Was California, large enough for a dozen states, to fall into the Union as free soil after all the sacrifices and treachery employed to make her slave territory? By no means! There would be another war before that was conceded.

Moreover, President Taylor was opposing the claims of Texas to about one-third of what she demanded as her soil. It is true the claim was shadowy, that Texas originally only had a respectable right to about one-half of what now constitutes that State; but, in true buccaneer fashion, the Texans were out for all that could be secured, and talked very loudly of what they would do if opposed. They even raised an army to fight the Union, and then thought better of it.

Territorially speaking, the South seemed to have lost by the war, and the prospects for the future were not brilliant. This was not the whole of the trouble. The Fugitive Slave law, which had been in existence almost from the beginning, had been rendered nugatory by a decision of the Supreme Court, which held that, while the local authorities and jails might be used in capturing and incarcerating runaway slaves where there was no objection, the law did not compel such action. As in most of the Northern States the antislavery sentiment had been fast growing, and as slave-catching at best was considered an odious business, many local authorities declined to aid the Southern authorities and refused the use of jails for purposes of detention. As the Constitution provided for the return of such fugitives, the Southerners now demanded a law

which should be stringent and effective as part of the compact of the Union.

There was one other grievance connected with slavery which the Northern people entertained, and it was forced to public notice after many years of agitation. Antislavery petitions began to come to the Senate by wagon-loads. Most of these asked for abolition in the District of Columbia, over which Congress had jurisdiction. In time these were rejected, or cast into a box without comment. By this time, however, there was at least a well-defined sentiment, to which many slave-holders adhered, that the spectacle of the District of Columbia as a leading slave-mart of the country was undignified. While the abolitionists of the North considered the trade immoral, many of the slavery partisans of the South thought it might be well to give a sort of sop to the "incendiaries" by suppressing the slave-trade in the District, though not preventing the holding of slaves.

These were the "five bleeding wounds" of the republic as Clay called them, and after consultation with Webster and Calhoun he made his plans. Rising one day late in January, 1850, in the Senate, he spectacularly waved aloft a series of resolutions, which he had prepared. All eyes were immediately riveted on him, for it was seen by his manner that he had something important on hand. For every wound Clay had a plaster as follows :

Wound Number One.—California to be admitted as a free State. There seemed no help for this, since the people did not want slavery, and would resent any effort to force it upon them in violation of those "State's rights," so dear to the very men who were back of the slavery propaganda.

Wound Number Two.—New Mexico and Utah to be admitted as Territories without specification as to slavery, that point to be settled by the people at the time of application for admission as States. It was essential that something be done to organize New Mexico, where the military were in

control, in constant fear of a conflict with the Texans. Utah also needed a semblance of government, as the Mormons had been squatters there for years, and were a menace to the Argonauts of the plains.

Wound Number Three.—Texas to be paid a number of millions of dollars (not expressed in the resolution) as a bribe for peace and in lieu of her outrageous claims to territory.

Wound Number Four.—A more efficient fugitive slave law under the administration of the Federal courts and officials.

Wound Number Five.—Abolition of the slave-trade in the District of Columbia, with an expressed determination not to interfere with the interstate slave-trade.

These resolutions were to be embodied in a single bill, and adherence to the compromises was held up as the sole chance of saving the Union. At first there were misgivings at the proposals. Many liked one or several of the propositions; no one liked them all. Clay had undertaken a herculean task, and it seemed for a time as if it would be impossible to get the bills under way. When Foote, of Mississippi, moved for a grand committee to be elected by the Senate, great was Clay's chagrin to find that he had not been chosen a member. It was only the magnanimity of Webster that led him to change his vote and secure Clay a place on what would otherwise have been a farcical committee. The committee, with Clay as chairman, well represented all portions of the country. As a result of its efforts, a bill of thirty-nine sections was reported, which embodied three of the compromises Clay had originally offered. The two others were made separate measures.

Then the flood-gates of oratory were opened, and if words could have been effective, something important must have resulted. Never before nor since have as many men of great talent expressed themselves so freely on the whole state of the Union,

—for in the course of debate there was no attempt to confine remarks closely to the subject in hand. The whole political situation was threshed over. Everything was said on every side of the questions at issue.

Clay led off the debate in a two-days' speech, on February 6–7, before the committee of thirteen was organized.

It is impossible to contemplate this last great fight of Clay without emotion. Two years later he was dead, and the Senators now engaged in angry dispute with him vied with each other in testimonials to his bigness of soul, his largeness of spirit, and his individuality. These qualities were apparent in the great debate which consumed months. Like most men of exceeding sanguine temperament, Clay was subject to fits of intense depression. He never felt so pessimistic as at this time. His efforts to save the Union were absolutely sincere, and he undoubtedly hastened the end of his life in the struggle which ensued. Knowing that he was to speak, the Senate chamber was crowded ; women contended for places in the gallery, and never did a Senator address a more distinguished audience. Clay was accompanied from the hotel by the chaplain of the Senate, and walked with such evident pain and coughed so much, that an effort was made to have him desist from the effort. No such considerations moved him. He was helped up the steps slowly by the chaplain, stopping frequently to cough and then to get his breath. When he took his seat, it was apparent to all that he was almost in the last stages of life, and great concern was manifested by his colleagues over his condition. He refused all efforts at adjournment, and, at the appointed time, rose in his place and began that memorable address which lasted through two days.

HENRY CLAY AND WIFE

(From a daguerrotype taken about the time of their golden wedding. In possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky, and reproduced especially for this volume.)

Many eyes were suffused with tears as the old man straightened himself to his full height and began his speech. It was almost like seeing a ghost come back to speak. Clay alone of those who were gathered there was born in the throes of the Revolution. He alone had seen British redcoats marauding the country, and he had seen one stick, in wanton sacrilege, his naked sword into the grave of the father who had been buried a few hours before. He had witnessed all the changes which had come since the nation was born. He had been in public life almost half a century,—before many of his colleagues were born, and even those who had differed from him could not but admire the man who, in his age, had come to heal the wounds of the nation he loved so well.

He began with some reference to his age and infirmities, and the long career which he had spent in public life. It was known that he had given a grudging assent to the election of Taylor, but he had offered no factious opposition. That he was now to openly oppose the known wishes of the administration had led many to think he might still be a candidate for the Presidency. He replied to these in language not quite as explicit as he might have used, but more so than he gave voice to afterwards. He said :

"Sir, what vicissitudes do we not pass through in this short mortal career of ours? Eight years, or nearly eight years ago, I took my leave finally and, as I supposed, forever from this body. At that time I did not conceive the possibility of ever again returning to it. And if my private wishes and particular inclinations, and the desire during the short remnant of my days to remain in quiet and repose, could have prevailed, you would never have seen me occupying the seat which I now occupy on this floor. The Legislature of the State to which I belong, unsolicited by me, chose to designate me for this station, and I have come here, sir, in obe-

dience to a sense of stern duty, with no personal objects, no pride of view, now or hereafter, to gratify. I know, sir, the jealousies, the fears, the apprehensions which are engendered by the existence of that party spirit to which I have referred; but if there be in my hearing now, in or out of this capitol, any one who hopes, in his race for honors and elevation for higher honors and higher elevation than that which he now occupies, I beg him to believe that I, at least, will never jostle him in the pursuit of those honors or that elevation. I beg him to be perfectly persuaded that, if my wishes prevail, my name shall never be used in competition with his. I beg to assure him that, when my service is terminated in this body, my mission, so far as respects the public affairs of this world and upon this earth, is closed, and closed, if my wishes prevail, forever."

In this he spoke with intense earnestness, but it is impossible to believe that he would have declined a still further call had it come to him from the country, and had he seemed to himself to have any chances of success.

After a pause he discussed each of his propositions in turn fully, and by this time all semblance of weakness had disappeared. The fire burned in his eyes, his soul was lifted up, and he spoke fluently, eloquently, and without apparent fatigue for three hours, during which time he was frequently interrupted. Declining a chance to end for the day, he finished the first half of his speech amid a burst of applause, and then there was a scene such as the Senate had never seen before. Men ran to grasp his hand, and women vied with each other in a desire to kiss his tear-stained cheeks.

The next day he delivered the last half of his argument, and it was, in many respects, more important than the first. He explained his views freely on all points, answered questions, engaged in colloquies, and sat down only to have the scenes of the previous day repeated.

The debate soon became general, and when the

committee of thirteen finally reported what was facetiously called the Omnibus Bill, putting all territorial questions in one measure, it was continued with renewed vigor. In the debate which followed a few speeches were notable. Calhoun, with one foot in the grave into which he was to sink in a few days, announced his adherence to the compromises, for which he cared little, in a speech which he prepared in his chamber, but was too ill to deliver. It was read by a fellow-senator, Calhoun being present, as has been remarked, "like a disembodied spirit." Calhoun's last legacy to his country was a demand that there be a complete reversal of existing conditions, and there be set up a sort of dual government by which no legislation was to be passed without the consent of a dual executive, one from the slave and one from the free States. Though he professed to love the Union, he insisted that it never could be saved by putting it on a pedestal and worshipping it as "glorious." The speech had little effect, for Calhoun was now not only almost a corpse, but completely a political orphan. He had educated men who would carry out his theories to their legitimate conclusion.

Webster rose on the seventh of March to deliver that speech which wounded the antislavery men to the quick, and made them feel that the "god-like statesman" had been consorting with emissaries of the devil. He was for the compromises, and, in a pessimistic tone so different from that of twenty years before, when he electrified the nation in his reply to Hayne, he seemed to fear that the nation was tottering. It was not so much the matter as the manner of his speech which offended New England, and from that day to his death Webster was no true son of Massachusetts, according to the sentiment of the rising generation. He was soon to go

into Fillmore's cabinet to fight him for the succession, and finally to die a disappointed man.

Davis, of Mississippi, opposed the compromises on the ground that slavery was attacked by the North as an immoral institution. He declared that slavery was sanctioned by God and the Bible, and that it needed no other approval, and wound up by saying that never, under any circumstances, would he accept any compromise that did not extend the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, making one California State slave.

Benton, rugged, defiant, Union-loving, and sanguine, did not admit there was anything to compromise. He wanted California admitted as a free State, and agreed with President Taylor that it was wrong to bring California in with all the sins of other States upon her back. He declared against compromise, and denied there was any occasion for the pessimistic tone of his colleagues. He said that he considered slavery a great evil, although he was himself a slave-holder.

The most effective speech in its consequences was that of Seward, the rising star of free soil Whigs, who opposed the compromises, and declared that there was a higher law of conduct than the Constitution. This was taken by many to mean that the right of private judgment was paramount to the law, but this was not his meaning. The utterance cost him the friendship of many public men, and really defeated him for the nomination in 1860, which Lincoln bore away when it seemed as if it was in the New Yorker's grasp.

Taylor was resolute against the compromises, and if the bill had passed in his lifetime he would certainly have vetoed it. He urged his followers to stand firm and not give in to nullifiers or secessionists. There was indeed a danger. At Nashville there was

a convention of Southern men representing a number of States who openly talked secession, and there were timid souls who feared the determination would be made and carried out. Taylor stated openly that, if such action was taken, he would lead an army of Southern troops and put down secession, and there is no reason to doubt that he would have tried or little that he would have succeeded had he lived.

Clay's relations with Taylor were cold and formal throughout his brief administration. He naturally felt aggrieved that he had been passed over for the warrior, but he showed no resentment. He could not this time appear as the chief champion of the party, for he looked upon Taylor not as a Whig but a sort of adventurer. He was deprived of the nomination largely through the efforts of his best friend, Senator J. J. Crittenden, who wanted Clay to be President, but did not think he could be elected. Nevertheless, Clay helped Crittenden all he could, and on his dying bed besought his children to be kind to him, though for a short time there had been an estrangement between them. Taylor asked no advice of Clay, and he offered none, feeling that they were diametrically opposed in policy. Yet Clay made a speech in 1850, in which he paid a glowing tribute to Taylor, whom he had known almost from boyhood, and greatly esteemed as a soldier. For some reason, not entirely clear, he seems to have thought that Taylor did not give his son, Henry Clay, Jr., the opportunities he might have had. When he heard a member of the Cabinet (though without authority from Taylor or any one else) say that, because his son James B. Clay had been given a diplomatic mission, his (Henry Clay's) mouth should be shut, he was for the moment wroth. Then, as was a characteristic of him, he forgot all about it. He fought

Taylor's policy to the end, and was one of those who thought that his death was a happy deliverance of the republic from a terrible crisis.

The debate dragged on for weary weeks. Clay bore the brunt of the fight, though at times he was necessarily absent. He spoke nearly one hundred times on some phase of the bill, usually briefly. On one occasion the subject of slavery in the Territories was being discussed, and he declared that Whigs and others in favor of the Wilmot Proviso ought not to complain as the bill gave them more than that resolution intended, and that there was no slavery in the Territories, and none probable, as climatic conditions were against it. Webster, in his great speech, had taken the same ground, saying that it was unnecessary to re-enact a law of God, and Seward had replied that whenever he found a law of God he certainly wanted it incorporated in legislation. When Clay was besought to admit slavery into the Territories, he made that declaration which will always be remembered :

"Coming from a slave State as I do, I owe it to myself, I owe it to truth, I owe it to the subject to say that no earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure for the introduction of slavery where it had not before existed, either South or North of the Missouri Compromise line."

Had Clay spoken thus in 1844, nothing could have prevented him from becoming President.

Considering that the compromise bills included the most important legislation enacted in history up to that time ; that, in some particulars, they were assailed by nearly every Senator on the floor ; that it took six months to secure final action, and that Clay was seventy-four years old and feeble, his exertions were no less than marvellous. Time and

again he was asked to abandon the leadership which he constantly exercised while present. On only a few days was he absent, confined to his room by the cough that was growing worse. In one of those absences, the Senate changed the provisions of the Fugitive Slave law, so that trial by jury for the slave was eliminated, and either Clay was not informed of this, or it escaped his mind for some time. He requested that it be changed, as he had in youth and old age frequently defended slaves, and never for a consideration.

In defending this particular measure Clay made a statement which is of peculiar interest in these days. He said the people of the North looked upon the slavery question as one of sentiment, while in the South it affected the wives, children, and hearthstones of everyone. While objecting to slavery as a principle, he defended it in practise, declaring that the meanest thing a man could do was to seduce from masters or mistresses the household slaves which were a part of the family and treated with kindness. He also insisted that a man who harbored a runaway slave was as bad as the man who deliberately stole one from a plantation. This was extreme ground, more advanced than he would have taken many years previous. He instanced the fact that one of his household slaves had been induced to run away, and, that after some years of dissatisfaction in the North, she had sent to her mistress for money so that she might return to slavery. The trouble with Clay's argument here was, that it showed not only the brighter side of slavery, but it dealt with an institution which was different in Kentucky from what it was in the cotton belt.

Nevertheless, to blame Clay severely for his conduct at that time is assuming a great deal. It is too commonly taken for granted by those who discuss

slavery, that the mere striking off the shackles from the slaves settled the whole race question. It should be realized that we are now face to face with one only less serious than slavery itself, and concerning which there seems to be as little agreement as to action as there was in 1850 over slavery. Clay wanted to go surely even if slowly.

He was, in fact, in a very embarrassing position. He was accused by the North of surrendering everything to the South. He was accused by the South of surrendering everything to the North. He was obliged to make the statement that he considered that the North made most of the sacrifices. This was in accordance with his constant plan to make concessions to the South.

In the course of the debate he had a colloquy with nearly every Senator on the floor, sometimes courteous, and often to the contrary. With Senator Hale he had a bitter bout over the subject of abolition. It seemed that some Southern Senator had called Clay an abolitionist. This, Hale resented. Clay expressed once more his opinion of the abolitionists, which was anything but favorable, and wished that those who accused him of predilections in their favor could see the basketful of papers which he received weekly, in which he was more abused than any other man in America.

Benton, who was strong in his opposition to the compromises and insistent that California be admitted as a free State without regard to any other consideration, was accused by Clay of having changed his views on the subject. He alleged that the year previous he thought California ought to wait. The dispute arose over a letter that had been published in a Missouri newspaper. A colloquy occurred.

BENTON: "I consider him (Clay) the author of that letter. He has adopted it. He has produced it in the American Senate. He has read it here, and as his letter, I brand it as a most infamous calumny; and with that brand upon it, it shall go upon the parliamentary history of the country."

A SENATOR: "Call him to order."

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: "The Senator is not in order."

BENTON: "Everybody is in order but me. Everybody is in order to attack me; but I am not in order to defend myself. He must take care how he produces such things against me."

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: "The Senator is not in order."

CLAY: "I shall only say, that I repel with scorn and indignation the imputation that I am the author of that letter. I hurl it back to him that he may put it in his casket of calumnies, where he has many other things of the same sort."

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: "The Senator is not in order."

BENTON: "You hurl it back, but I got it on you first."

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: "Order must be restored in the hall."

WEBSTER: "I have only risen to say, that I am exceedingly pained that such occurrences should take place in the Senate."

BENTON: "Oh, it is damnable."

This indicates that the old man was still keen in his perceptions and ready for any encounter. Clay was more irritated by Benton than by any other Senator. He had just become reconciled to him after years of "non-intercourse," but fire continued to flash when they met in debate. Benton was a man of enlarged views and strong patriotism, but had an immense amount of egotism, was pompous, and because of his long service liked to lecture everyone in the Senate, Clay included. As Clay had been in the Senate when Benton was a mere boy, he resented such conduct, and frequent were the clashes between them. In no case did Clay ever pick a quarrel, but once entered upon one, he gave his antagonist all the trouble possible.

His last great speech was made on the twenty-

second of July, nine days before the defeat of the bill. Perhaps there is nothing which he has left on record that so vitally expresses the man and his views on the whole state of the Union. Beginning with another reference to his advanced age and infirmities he made one more plea for the measures. He insisted that he was not pessimistic in believing the prevailing tranquillity to be only temporary and that a storm was arising. In this speech he was more severe on the radical Southern statesmen than formerly, and he not only besought them, but lectured them sharply. He told them their theory that slavery was a national institution was ridiculous, and that they never could maintain it; that if they seceded to establish that principle there would be three American republics, and the South would be at the mercy of the strongest.

All was in vain. The compromises were not as a whole agreeable to the majority.

Events of the session were not confined to oratory. Foote, of Mississippi, a small man with a large temper, thought that Benton intended to assault him on the floor of the Senate and drew a loaded pistol and pointed it at his antagonist. Benton was unarmed, and Clay interfered to prevent a shot which might have thrown the whole nation into paroxysms. Foote originally had been against the compromises, but had been converted by Clay. This affray caused a great deal of excitement, and there was a desire to hurry matters.

Death intervened to settle the problem. Taylor died suddenly in July, and Fillmore, who was favorable to the compromises, became President. Even this seemed of no avail at first. When the voting began, section after section was struck out until at last there was left nothing but the clause relating to a Territorial government for Utah. In

disgust, Clay left the capital for Newport, fearful that the end of the republic had come, and that all his efforts had been in vain. As he sat on the beach and looked out upon the waves, which seemed to beckon him to his rest, he must have felt that his life had indeed been a failure, since not only had he been disappointed in his personal hopes, but had lost his last fight to save the Union he loved. If the iron of despair ever entered his soul, it must have been then, though it was only for the hour. Soon he recovered his spirits, and a way was found to accomplish his purposes, though a different way from that which he had intended.

Though there was no majority for the bill as a whole, there was a majority of varying composition for each of Clay's "plasters," and they were passed rather hurriedly in view of the length of the fight which had killed the Omnibus Bill. Most of this was done in his three weeks' absence.

Clay, though in a physically weak condition, surmounted all difficulties. He made the greatest contest of his life, sitting throughout nearly every session, and rising often to speak or interrupt Senators. There were times, too, when the old man had relief from pain and went into the society which always lionized him. It is reported by one observer that, at such times, the belles of Washington crowded around Clay and would not leave until they had been kissed. While his physique was often weak, there was at no time any deterioration of his intellectual vigor. In the Senate the situation was such that his wit was seldom exercised, but among his friends and admirers it is reported that he was at his best, though often after such meetings he would go home to a sleepless night.

There were many times when friends and opponents thought he would fall in his place, yet he tired

out some of the most vigorous. One young Senator from the South remarked :

"I was born after Henry Clay entered the Senate, and have always been esteemed for my powers of endurance, but the 'Old Oak of Kentucky' still makes me seem like a sapling."

One day his servant told some friends, who called on their way to the capitol, that Clay was determined to go to the chamber that day, though he had been awake all night in an agony of distress with his cough. Two of them marched to his room and told Clay frankly that, as his superiors in physique only, they must insist that he remain at home. Clay rose in indignation, put on his hat and cloak without assistance, and stalked from the room with a countenance that was formidable. He rode to the capitol, but stood on his feet for an hour, answering questions and parrying thrusts.

Clay's last connection with legislation of any prominence was with the Fugitive Slave law. He spoke once or twice in the next session, but only appeared in the chamber at a single session of the Senate which met December, 1851. He had intended to resign, and had so expressed himself. He was anxious to get back to Ashland, but he had become impressed with the fact that the compromises were far from being satisfactory to the country, and he resolved at any cost to stick to the last at his post. With forty-four other prominent members of Congress he signed a statement that he would support no man for high office who did not adhere to the compromises. National and State conventions passed resolutions more or less to this effect, yet the laws were not on the statute books before they began to make trouble, and, in the end, produced that cleavage which resulted in the Republican party, the secession party, and the Civil War.

THE COMPROMISES OF 1850

The so-called compromises of 1850 were not such in any proper meaning of the word. They were expedients which proved abortive. The majority of the people at the time were opposed to slavery extension or to yielding anything to the Southern propaganda. The admission of California made the free States one in the majority, but it was long ere the Senate was in sympathy with the radical views of the North. In the popular branch opposition to slavery and all its works grew rapidly. It may be said that it was not entirely rational in all respects; that those who were so anxious to get rid of slavery or to repress it were frequently lacking in tact and wisdom. It ought also to be said that the same was true, in a larger sense, of the Southern statesmen who worked themselves up into a perfect frenzy on the subject. Immediately Congress began to tamper with the compromises, to dispute as to their interpretation, and the subject of slavery, which Clay hoped had been put to sleep for generations, was soon the burning, indeed almost the only issue in politics.

But to be just to Clay, it was not his fault that the compromises failed. It may have been his misfortune to have been called upon to compose differences which were irreconcilable. It is not likely there was any other man in the country who could have accomplished anything. It was because of his long services, his known abilities, his upright character, and his extraordinary psychological qualities that Clay was forced by circumstances to take the lead. It would be rash to contend that the compromises were of no value. They gave a new starting-point in politics. They fixed a standard from which men of all parties could take their bearings, and, under the controlling law of conservatism, they made disunion impossible for a decade.

Whether it would have been better to have fought it out in 1850, rather than wait, is one of the things upon which men differ. What we do know is that when the contest came the Union was preserved, and Clay cannot be denied the credit of having been a large factor in its preservation, though his body then lay in the grave, while his soul was marching on to that victory to witness which would have compensated him for all his labors and disappointments. However he may have erred in some particulars, he did not live in vain.

XXV

PRESERVER OF THE UNION

"If any one desires to know the leading and paramount object of my public life, the preservation of the Union will furnish him the key."

This was the utterance of Henry Clay near the close of his life, and it was true to his endeavor. However large a place personal ambitions may seem to have had in his career, they were always subordinate to his love of the Union and his desire to maintain it. For this desire he sacrificed much that was dear. It was characteristic of him that he took much counsel of his fears. He never believed that in his day the Union had been established as thoroughly as was necessary. His efforts were constantly directed towards tightening the bonds. It is difficult for that generation which has grown up since the Civil War to appreciate how experimental the republic was considered for many decades. At the start the Constitution was looked upon askance by many, if not by most of the leading men of the country. It was accepted simply because there must be something done to escape chaos. No sacredness attached to that document. In the early days, separation was freely talked of, and without causing comment. New England became disaffected in the second war with Great Britain, and her course was deprecated, but it was not considered extraordinary. Clay, who had seen the country develop from infancy, was greatly attached to it not only because his cast of mind favored a strong national government, but be-

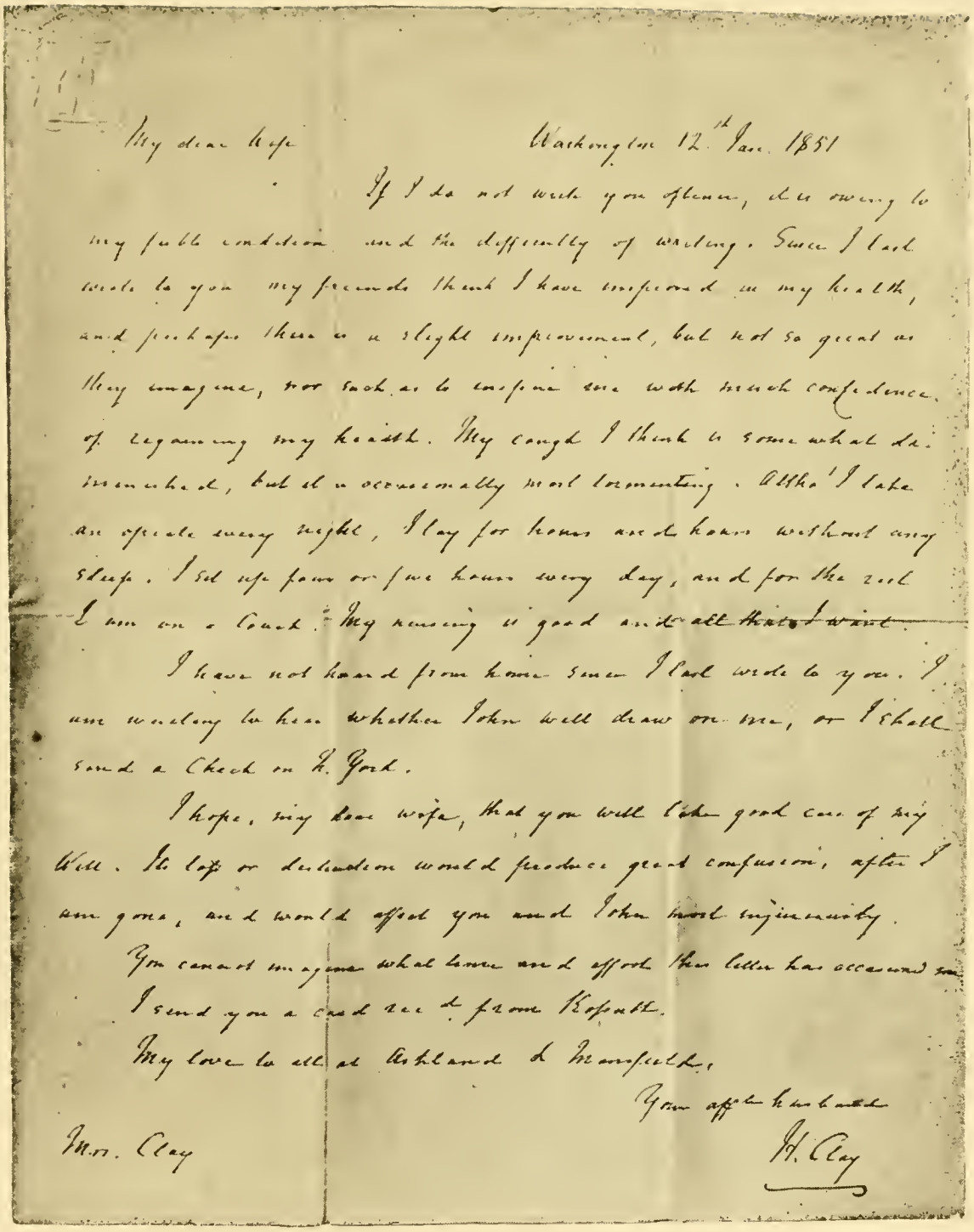
cause his imagination and his affections were stirred by the present worth and the coming glories of the great republic.

However, he too well understood the temper of the times to believe that affection for the Constitution was general. In his despondency he overestimated the separation sentiment or paid too much attention to the boasts and threats of States or statesmen. He was at all times the ardent champion of the Union, drove Congress into declaring war, and was willing to fight on after others were ready for peace. It was in the nullification troubles of 1832–33 that he became the ardent champion of the country's integrity not only in words, but in acts. In his speeches in favor of the tariff compromise he had frequent occasion to refer to his views upon the perpetuity of the Union. He affected to believe that South Carolina never would have carried out her threats, that she would have backed down. But he felt the danger was such that she might have fought and carried away other States with her, involving the country in civil war. He once said :

"If there be any who want civil war, who want to see the blood of any portion of our countrymen spilt, I am not one of them. I wish to see war of no kind ; but, above all, I do not desire to see civil war. When war begins, whether civil or foreign, no human sight is competent to forsee when, or how, or where it is to terminate. But when a civil war shall be lighted up in the bosom of our happy land, and armies are marching, and commanders are winning their victories, and fleets are in motion on our coasts, tell me, if you can, tell me, if any human being can tell its duration. God alone knows where such a war would end."

On a subsequent occasion he said :

"The difference between the friends and foes of the compromise under consideration is, that they would, in the enforcing act, send forth alone a flaming sword. We would



My dear Wife Washington 12th Jan. 1851

If I do not write you often, it is owing to my feeble condition and the difficulty of writing. Since I last wrote to you my friends think I have improved in my health, and perhaps there is a slight improvement, but not so great as they imagine, nor such as to inspire me with much confidence of regaining my health. My cough I think is somewhat diminished, but is occasionally most tormenting. Altho' I take an opiate every night, I lay for hours and hours without any sleep. I sit up four or five hours every day, and for the rest I am on a Couch. My nursing is good and in all that I want

I have not heard from home since I last wrote to you. I am waiting to hear whether John will draw on me, or I shall send a Check on N. York.

I hope, my dear wife, that you will take good care of my Will. Its loss or destruction would produce great confusion, after I am gone, and would afford you and John much inconvenience.

You cannot imagine what labor and effort this letter has occasioned me.

I send you a card rec'd from Kossuth.

My love to all at Ashland & Mansfield,

Your affte husband

H. Clay

Mrs. Clay

LETTER WRITTEN BY HENRY CLAY TO HIS WIFE ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF BEFORE HIS DEATH. HE WAS THEN NEARLY SEVENTY-FOUR YEARS OLD

(Original in possession of Mr. Thomas H. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky. Photographed especially for this volume.)

send out that also, but along with it the olive branch as a messenger of peace. They cry out, the law, the law, the law! Power, power, power! We, too, reverence the law, and bow to the supremacy of its obligations; but we are in favor of the law executed in mildness, and of power tempered with mercy. They, as we think, would hazard a civil commotion, beginning in South Carolina, and extending, God only knows where. While we would vindicate the federal government, we are for peace, if possible, the Union and liberty. We want no war, above all, no civil war, no family strife. We want to see no sacked cities, no desolated fields, no smoking ruins, no streams of American blood shed by American arms."

But Clay could do no more than postpone these scenes until after he had passed from the theatre of action, and it cannot be said, in the light of subsequent events, that he was exaggerating the situation. Closing this speech with a special reference, Clay said:

"I have been accused of ambition in presenting this measure. Ambition! Inordinate ambition! If I had thought of myself only, I should have never brought it forward. I know well the perils to which I expose myself; the risk of alienating grateful and valued friends, with but little prospect of making new ones. If any new ones could compensate for the loss of those whom we have long tried and loved; and the honest misconceptions both of friends and foes. Ambition! If I had listened to its soft and seducing whispers; if I had yielded myself to the dictates of a cold, calculating, and prudential policy, I would have stood still and unmoved. I might even have silently gazed upon the raging storm, enjoyed its loudest thunders, and left those who are charged with the care of the vessel of State, to conduct it as they could. I have been heretofore often unjustly accused of ambition. Low, grovelling souls, who are utterly incapable of elevating themselves to the higher and nobler duties of pure patriotism—beings who, forever keeping their own selfish aims in view, decide all public measures by their presumed influence or their aggrandisement—judge me by the venal rule which they prescribe to themselves. I have given to the winds those false accusations, as I consign that which now impeaches my motives. I have no desire of

office, not even the highest. The most exalted is but a prison, in which the incarcerated incumbent daily receives his cold, heartless visitors, marks his weary hours, and is cut off from the practical enjoyment of all the blessings of genuine freedom. I am no candidate for any office in the gift of the people in these States, united or separated. I never wish, never expect to be. Pass this bill, tranquillize the country, restore confidence and affection in the Union, and I am willing to go home to Ashland and renounce public service forever. I shall there find in its groves, under its shades, on its lawns, amid my flocks and herds, in the bosom of my family, sincerity and truth, attachment and fidelity, and gratitude, which I have not always found in the walks of public life. Yes, I have ambition ; but it is the ambition of being the humble instrument in the hands of Providence to reconcile a divided people ; once more to revive concord and harmony in a distracted land—the pleasing ambition of contemplating the glorious spectacle of a free, united, prosperous, and fraternal people !''

Doubtless Clay meant every word of what he said notwithstanding the fact he was afterwards a candidate for the Presidency and three times unsuccessfully for the nomination. In some men this conduct would seem inconsistent—perhaps discreditable, but every friend and every enemy of Clay knew that he meant what he said at the time he said it, and that he was persuaded from his purposes by no ignoble impulses.

In succeeding speeches for years Clay was wont to make an earnest appeal for the Union and to explain that his principal measures had for their prime object the cementing national spirit. There were those who thought he dwelt too much on this theme, but if so, such was not Clay's intention. In 1839 in the Senate he made his notable attack upon the abolitionists, to which reference has already been made. In the course of this attack he said :

''Abolition should no longer be regarded as an imaginary danger. The abolitionists, let me suppose, succeed in their

present aim of uniting the inhabitants of the free States, as one man, against the inhabitants of the slave States. Union on the one side will beget union on the other. And this process of reciprocal consolidation will be attended with all the violent prejudices, and bitter passions, and implacable animosities, which ever degraded or deformed human nature. A virtual dissolution of the Union will have taken place while the forms of its existence remain. The most valuable element of union, mutual kindness, the feelings of sympathy, the fraternal bonds, which now happily unite us will be extinguished forever. One section will stand in menacing and hostile array against the other. The collision of opinion will be quickly followed by the clash of arms."

Referring to slavery he denounced it as an evil, but had no remedy to offer. Touching upon the question of freeing the slaves, he said :

"Their liberty, if it were possible, could only be established by violating the incontestable powers of the States, and subverting the Union. And beneath the ruins of the Union would be buried, sooner or later, the liberty of both races."

In his whole career Clay admitted but one justification for secession, and that "the impossible case," as he called it, in which Congress should undertake to interfere with slavery in the States where it existed. This sentiment he uttered to the Legislature of Kentucky just before his death.

During the discussion of the compromises of 1850 Clay was disturbed by constant references to the rights of the South, Southern "allegiance," and particularly by the fact that the Nashville Convention was meditating treason and only adjourned because the compromises seemed to make rash action at the time imprudent. On one occasion, in a storm of passion, he voiced a sentiment which has long been engraven on the hearts of American patriots :

"Sir, I have heard something said on this and a former occasion about allegiance to the South. I know no South, no

North, no East, no West to which I owe any allegiance. I owe allegiance to two sovereignties, and only two : one is the sovereignty of this Union, and the other is the sovereignty of the State of Kentucky. My allegiance is to this Union and to my State ; but if gentlemen suppose they can exact from me an acknowledgment of allegiance to any ideal or future contemplated confederacy of the South, I here declare I owe no allegiance to it ; nor will I, for one, come under such allegiance if I can avoid it. I know what my duties are, and gentlemen may cease to remind me that I am from a slave-holding State. . . . If Kentucky to-morrow unfurls the banner of resistance unjustly, I never will fight under that banner. I owe a paramount allegiance to the whole Union, a subordinate one to my own State. When my State is right, when it has a cause for resistance, when tyranny and wrong and oppression insufferable arise, I will then share her fortunes ; but if she summons me to the battle-field or to support her in any cause which is unjust against the Union, never, never will I engage with her in such a cause. . . . There are as brave, as dauntless, as gallant men and as devoted patriots, in my opinion, in every other State in the Union as are to be found in South Carolina herself ; and if in any unjust cause South Carolina or any other State should hoist the flag of disunion and rebellion, thousands, tens of thousands of Kentuckians would flock to the standard of their country to dissipate and repress their rebellion. These are my sentiments—make the most of them."

And a few days later, after the first defeat of the compromises, he spoke thus :

"The honorable Senator speaks of Virginia being my country. This Union is my country ; the thirty States are my country ; Kentucky is my country, and Virginia no more than any other of the States of this Union. She has created on my part obligations and feelings and duties towards her in my private character which nothing upon earth would induce me to forfeit or violate. But even if it were my own State—if my own State, lawlessly, contrary to her duty, should raise the standard of disunion against the residue, I would go against her. I would go against Kentucky herself, in that case, much as I love her."

These were strong words, brave words and true. They made a sensation at the time. They stiffened

some men in the South who were wavering on the brink of disunion, and they stimulated men in the North. In Kentucky the effect was electrical. It was largely the memory of Clay and his teachings which kept Kentucky from running into the arms of the Confederacy at the opening of the Civil War.

It cannot be said that the entrance of Kentucky into the Confederacy at that time would have been fatal to the Union, but if she had done so certainly the struggle would have been much longer, if not disastrous to the Union. If ever the voice of man saved his country it was that of Clay. Nor were his views personal to himself. Much excitement was aroused by the fact that Mr. Rhett, of Charleston, South Carolina, had, on his return from the Nashville Convention, seemed to urge secession. Clay in the Senate commented harshly on the subject. A friend in defence of Rhett declared he was a good man, and his remarks had been misquoted. This did not daunt Clay at all, who took occasion to say :

"If he pronounced the sentiment attributed to him, of raising the standard of disunion and of resistance to the common government, whatever he has been, if he follows up that declaration by corresponding overt acts, he will be a traitor, and I hope he will meet the fate of a traitor."

There was no mistaking such language. It was unequivocal and profoundly impressed some of those in the Senate. The galleries broke into applause. Clay returned to the attack ;

"I have said that I want to know whether we are bound together by a rope of sand or an effective, capable government, competent to enforce the powers therein vested by the Constitution of the United States? And what is the doctrine of Nullification set up again, revived, resuscitated, neither enlarged nor improved nor extended in this new edition of it? That when a single State shall undertake to say

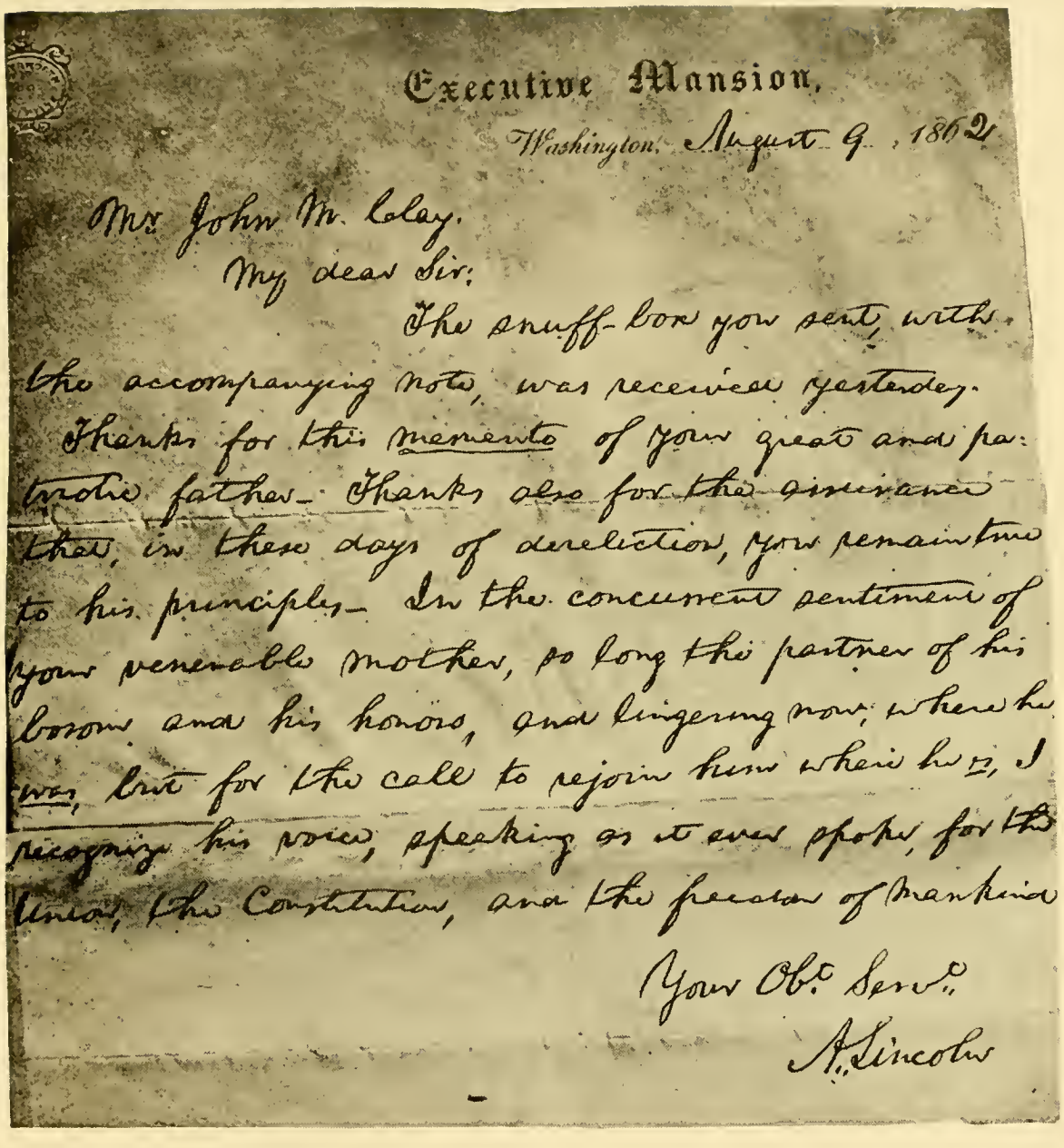
that a law passed by the twenty-nine others is unconstitutional and void, she may raise the standard of resistance and defy the twenty-nine. Sir, I denied the doctrine twenty years ago. I deny it now. I will die denying it. There is no such principle. If a State chooses to assume the attitude of defiance to the sovereign authority, and set up a separate nation against the nation of twenty-nine States, it takes the consequences upon itself, and the question is reduced to this: shall the twenty-nine yield to one, or the one yield to the twenty-nine? Call it by what mystic name you please,—a State, a corporation, a sovereignty,—whatever force of a State is put in array against the authority of the Union, it must submit to the consequences of revolt, as every other community must submit when a revolt is made.

"Gentlemen lay to their souls the flattering unction that the army is composed of officers from Virginia, South Carolina, and other Southern States, and the army will not draw their swords. What, sir, the army of the United States under the chief magistrate of the United States,—under the command of the gallant officer recently making the conquest of Mexico,—not to do their duty? Gentlemen will find themselves utterly mistaken if such a state of things arises."

After listening with impatience to the threats of disunion he declared: "I am for trying the strength of this government."

Clay would not admit that there was cause for disunion, even after the compromises were passed and it seemed that they were not to be cheerfully obeyed by either side. He manifested the same reluctance to admit a justification when it was charged that the laws were being violated by both sides, particularly when the North resisted the Fugitive Slave law not only by mob spirit but by the passage of "personal liberty laws." Asked when he would consent to disunion, he said, in an address on the subject before the Legislature of Kentucky:

"Never, for no possible contingency can I perceive which would make disunion desirable. I will yield, if Congress ever usurps the power to abolish slavery in the States where it exists; but I am sure it will never do so."



Executive Mansion,

Washington, August 9, 1862

Mrs John M. Clay.

My dear Sir:

The snuff-box you sent, with the accompanying note, was received yesterday. Thanks for this memento of your great and patriotic father. Thanks also for the assurance that, in these days of dereliction, you remain true to his principles. In the concurrent sentiment of your venerable mother, so long the partner of his bosom and his honors, and lingering now, where he was, but for the call to rejoin him where he is, I recognize his voice, speaking as it ever spoke, for the Union, the Constitution, and the freedom of Mankind

Your Obt. Servt.

A. Lincoln

LETTER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN TO JOHN M. CLAY, SON OF HENRY CLAY, DEALING WITH THE GREAT COMMONER'S VIEWS ON THE UNION

(Original in possession of Mrs. John M. Clay, Lexington, Kentucky. Photographed especially for this volume.)

Clay's own family was divided when the struggle came. The father was spared the sorrow of seeing child and grandchildren fighting for disunion. Of Clay's surviving family at the time of the war, his widow remained loyal and sent encouraging messages to Lincoln. Of the sons, James went with the Confederacy and died in exile; John and Thomas were loyal. John, who was living on the old Ashland estate, sent to Lincoln a snuff-box that had been presented to his father, with a friendly greeting from Mrs. Clay and himself. To this Lincoln replied in the following letter:

EXECUTIVE MANSION,

WASHINGTON, August 9, 1862.

MR. JOHN M. CLAY,

MY DEAR SIR,—The snuff-box you sent, with the accompanying note, was received yesterday.

Thanks for this *memento* of your great and patriotic father. Thanks also for the assurance that, in these days of dereliction, you remain true to his principles. In the concurrent sentiment of your venerable mother, so long the partner of his bosom and his honors, and lingering now, where he *was*, but for the call to rejoin him where he *is*, I recognize his voice, speaking as it ever spoke, for the Union, the Constitution, and the freedom of mankind.

Your Obt. Servt.,

A. LINCOLN.

This letter, characteristic as a literary composition and full of sentiment, compares favorably with anything Lincoln ever wrote. Lincoln was Clay's greatest pupil and disciple, and frequently acknowledged his obligations to the teachings of the Ashland statesman.

Of Clay's grandchildren, some fought for the Union and some for the Confederacy. A number died on the field or in hospital. In one family brother fought against brother—a condition by no means uncommon in the State—and both perished.

XXVI

LAST DAYS AND DEATH

Clay found that the air of Newport agreed with him, and he afterwards regretted that he had cut short his stay there in the summer of 1850. He was gone only three weeks. Returning to the Senate he remained in his seat until the end of September, when, upon adjournment, he went to Ashland. Here he was welcomed by his wife, who hoped that he would retire from public life now that his task had been accomplished. But Clay, knowing his work was not done, returned to the Senate in December, though greatly disturbed by his cough. Little was accomplished at this session except the defeat of the River and Harbor Bill in which he was greatly interested, and on which he made the last remarks of any importance in his public career. There was a brief extra-session of the Senate after adjournment, and Clay refused to accept that constructive mileage which has been for so many years a source of contention.

Clay was now very feeble, and his physician having recommended sea air, he determined to return home by way of Cuba and New Orleans. In a letter to his wife he says he has taken this decision with great reluctance, as he is anxious to be with her, but the state of his health and the bad condition of the roads made an overland journey dangerous. There was then no railroad across the Alleghanies, and he would have been greatly harassed in a trip over the Cumberland Road, which had been his pride, and which he had seen destroyed by the vetoes

of the Virginia statesmen. The trip took a month, and he was considerably benefited, and he afterwards regretted that he did not stay longer in Cuba. In New Orleans he met his son-in-law and grandchildren. He had visited New Orleans at length during his retirement from the Senate, and found many friends there, but he was pursuing a phantom when he sought health.

Although his physician assured him that his lungs were as yet unaffected, the cough increased, and it was apparent to most people that he was gradually sinking. Against all remonstrances he set out for Washington in the fall of 1851, alone, and was so exhausted when he arrived that he was able only once to enter the Senate chamber, where he made a few unimportant remarks and left it forever. Most of the winter he spent in his room, much of the time in bed. Here, on February 9, 1852, was presented to him the gold medal which admiring friends had secured for him, and for which he had furnished the inscription on the reverse side. It is interesting to note the acts by which Clay desired to be remembered. They were as follows: Senate, 1806; Speaker, 1811; war of 1812 with Great Britain; Ghent, 1814; Missouri Compromise, 1821; Spanish America, 1822; American system, 1824; Greece, 1824; Secretary of State, 1825; Panama instructions, 1826; Tariff compromise, 1833; Public Domain, 1833–41; peace with France preserved, 1835; Compromise, 1850.

This list is remarkable not only for what it contains but for what is omitted from it. The national bank is not mentioned, neither is one of his campaigns for the Presidency. But it is a noble record, one which cannot be matched by any other American and it is interesting as being that which Clay wrote himself. This was near the close of his life, and it

was painfully apparent that his days would be few, though they were prolonged beyond the hopes of the most sanguine.

"That constitution," said one of his physicians, "was made for ninety years; but it has been overtasked. It can never be braced up again but must fail."

This was all too true. Clay continued to write his family in cheerful vein and insisted that none of them should come to him, though many insisted on doing so. Although there has been some criticism on the fact that some members did not come in spite of this prohibition, it must be remembered that even in his dying days Clay was imperious, and though the most loving of fathers there was no child who dared disobey him.

As the old man lay dying in his chamber Kossuth reached Washington on that spectacular tour which nearly carried the American people off their feet, and made them lose their senses. Kossuth had many claims on the sympathies of this country, but none on the direct aid in behalf of Hungary which he sought, though few were willing to tell him so. It was reserved to the Dying Oak to tell him plainly that the aid he sought was impossible, that we could not embroil ourselves in European quarrels. This was said in a dignified manner and greatly affected Kossuth, though it was an extinguisher upon all his hopes. Clay was aware that his own career was ended, but he did not hesitate when the country was becoming intoxicated to draw it back to sober thought by the statement of a few truths which were effective.

Clay's last political act was to write a letter preferring Fillmore for the Presidency at a time when Webster and Scott were candidates. The latter was nominated and defeated overwhelmingly, and the

Whig party was greatly weakened. Clay preferred Fillmore because he adhered to the compromises and Webster felt aggrieved.

Clay's end was at hand. Thomas, a son, came from Lexington to nurse his father, and it was not long before he sent for his brother James, who arrived some days before his father's death.

Clay was serene although conscious of the approach of death. He had made his peace with his God, had done his best for his country, and had no desire to prolong the agony of existence, though he never once murmured. The reports made by Thomas to his family at Ashland show that the condition of the patient was hopeless from the start, and the grip on life was maintained longer than could reasonably have been expected. Mrs. Clay was too feeble to come to Washington, though she survived her husband nearly a dozen years. Two sons were at his bedside, one was in the insane asylum, and the other was perforce compelled to remain and look after Ashland, though he wished to be with his father. All during May and June the cough grew worse. Clay slept only under the influence of opiates and then poorly. For the last ten days he was so weak that he gave few signs of life, and dissolution was expected at any moment. The last night of his life he was heard to murmur the childish prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and it is said that he had repeated it every night since he learned to lisp it from his mother's lips. He passed away at seventeen minutes past eleven, June 29, 1852.

The announcement of his death was made in each House of Congress, which immediately adjourned out of respect for his memory, and the next day arrangements were made for the public funeral and that long journey to Lexington which was the most extraordinary in our history up to that time, and

since repeated in full measure only in the case of Abraham Lincoln.

On that day, June 30, the members of both Houses indulged in an outburst of eulogy. Senator Underwood announced the death of his colleague in a speech in which there was too much emotion to make it possible that it should be a proper estimate of the man. One after another, Senators and Representatives arose to speak of one who had been in all respects the most conspicuous figure in both bodies, and who had served over a longer period than any other member.

The finest tribute came from the youthful John C. Breckinridge, a member of the House, soon to become Vice-President and then to go over to secession. He said :

"As a leader in a deliberative body Mr. Clay had no equal in America. In him, intellect, person, eloquence and courage, united to form a character fit to command. He fired with his own enthusiasm, and controlled by his amazing will, individuals and masses. No reverse could crush his spirit, no defeat reduce him to despair. Equally erect and dauntless in prosperity and adversity, when successful he moved to the accomplishment of his purposes with severe resolution ; when defeated he rallied his broken bands around him, and from his eagle eye shot along their ranks the contagion of his own courage. Destined for a leader, he everywhere asserted his destiny. In his long and eventful life, he came in contact with men of all ranks and professions, but he never felt that he was in the presence of a man superior to himself. In the assemblies of the people, at the bar, in the Senate, everywhere within the circle of his personal presence, he assumed and maintained a position of pre-eminence."

Many others joined in eulogizing the departed statesman, and none spoke without feelings of deepest sorrow. There were among them those who had fought Clay in the forum and on the stump,

but none in the hour of death could feel resentment.

The funeral procession was the longest in the history of the country. The cortege moved from Washington via Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland and Cincinnati to Lexington, where the body arrived July 9.

The cortege arrived in Lexington at night, and was escorted by crowds of people who followed the official delegations from Lexington and those from other cities. Lighted by torches the catafalque proceeded to Ashland, where for one night the body of Clay remained in state. In the night hours Mrs. Clay alone was admitted to the chamber in his beloved home. There in prayer and tears she remained with the one she had loved. For fifty-three years she had lived in harmony and peace with him. Six daughters had been born to them, and all had passed away. Of five sons, one was insane from youth, and one was killed at Buena Vista.

The funeral services over Mr. Clay were the most impressive that had ever been held in this country. The whole of Kentucky had turned out to honor its greatest son. It seemed for the time as if the State had no hope in the future now that the Great Commoner was gone.

Above his grave the State reared a monument. It consists of a crypt in which lie the remains of Clay and his wife, a Corinthian shaft surmounted on which was a colossal statue of the Great Pacificator. For fifty years that statue was seen for many miles surrounding the cemetery. Every traveller on the trains entering Lexington had looked out eagerly to see the majestic form of the great statesman as he stood in the attitude of making a speech in the Senate. In the summer of 1902 a bolt of lightning knocked off the head of the statue and hurled

it to the ground. As Kentucky was then engaged in the throes of political strife in which there were many things said and done which were hardly in accordance with the views of Henry Clay, there were superstitious persons who looked upon the demolishment of the statue as an act of Providence. Colonel William C. P. Breckinridge, who married one of Clay's descendants, remarked, "Nothing but a stroke of lightning could make Clay lose his head." The Legislature was asked to appropriate fifteen hundred dollars to repair the statue, but refused even to report the bill out of committee, and at this writing the headless statue of Clay surmounts the monument.

Around this monument are buried many members of the family and the place has become a Mecca for travellers from all parts of the country. There reposes Clay, in the soil of his beloved Kentucky, as he had so often desired.

The following words are engraven on Clay's sarcophagus. They are his own:

"I can with unshaken confidence appeal to the Divine Arbiter for the truth of the declaration that I have been influenced by no impure purpose, no personal motive; have sought no personal aggrandizement; but that in all my public acts I have had a sole and single eye, and a warm, devoted heart, directed and dedicated to what in my best judgment I believe to be the true interests of my country."

And on a tablet in the crypt is written:

I KNOW NO SOUTH, NO NORTH, NO EAST, NO WEST.

American flags are to be found draping the tomb, with the inscription "These are our credentials," and there fresh flowers are laid as tributes from

HENRY CLAY'S MONUMENT AT LEXINGTON

(In 1902 lightning knocked off the head of the superimposed statue, and the Kentucky Legislature refused to make an appropriation to repair it. From a photograph taken for this volume.)

those who remember and loved him and who find in this tribute the best expression of that sentiment which was so strongly developed in one who loved Nature and was never so happy as when surrounded by her most visible forms. He sleeps in peace, but he still lives in the affections of the nation he loved so well, and in the minds of millions who have been born since he died and who recognize that his many efforts in behalf of our common country form one of the richest heritages that any American has left to his people.

XXVII

HENRY CLAY THE MAN

In any attempt to narrate the life or summarize the character of so extraordinary a personality as Henry Clay, it must ever appear that his deficiencies and shortcomings are emphasized. The virtues of private and the victories of public life in civil affairs are not so conspicuous as the weaknesses and failures. The good is more important, but never so easily described nor so notably impressed upon the mind. If any reader of this volume has felt there has been an effort to minimize the virtues of Clay or to exaggerate his failings, I have been writing to little purpose. Clay's position in history is assured. No writer can minimize it and it may be vain to expect that it has been accentuated. The effort of these pages has been to draw a portrait of one of the greatest of American citizens, to explain exactly how, when, and where he achieved for his country; to make prominent the man rather than the statesman.

Henry Clay from youth was of marked ability. He was original, ebullient, sanguine, imaginative, and forceful. He drew men to him, less by his rare intellectual powers than by a personality which was well-nigh irresistible. He loved his fellow man, he loved his State, he loved all States, and he loved his country. If it seem to any that his life was a failure because he lost the Presidency so ardently desired, or because he failed in so many of the measures

which were so dear to him, it should be remembered that affirmatively he accomplished much. He was in the last analysis one of the most successful of American statesmen.

We owe to him whatever benefits arise from the protective system, which has been established so that for more than forty years it has received no substantial set-back and has been constantly advanced by his disciples. We owe to him, perhaps more than to Webster, that love of country which is now so universal, but which in his day was a divided sentiment. We owe to him much that enters into the daily life of every American citizen and we are not likely in any event to appreciate it to full measure.

We have had but one statesman since Clay's time in any way comparable to him, and that was Blaine, who seemed, in a smaller way, to have had a career somewhat parallel. But it is not the statesman, but the genial, whole-souled, imperious, lovable Clay that we think upon and lament. Nature seemed in him to have concentrated her richest gifts and when he fell there was none to take his place. There are still living those who in youth knew Clay in his old age and they bear unanimous testimony to the wonderful soul of the man. It need not be regretted that, after all, he failed of the Presidency. That office would have brought him no additional honors for posterity to admire and might have cost him much. He, in his calmer hours, looked on the Presidential office as a prison-house and never lamented his failures to secure it.

It is difficult for the ordinary man in these days to account for the failure of Clay's chief ambition. It seems opposed to the natural order of things and almost against experience. If Clay was really the popular man as represented, why did he fail to re-

ceive the approbation of the public? No expert sociologist has any trouble over this problem. In recent years the psychology of great masses of people has been more closely studied, and it is known that what is sometimes called the "mob spirit" is much opposed to calm reasoning. There are many problems in human history that are inexplicable to the ordinary person. We can only admit that they exist and reasonably account for them. That the American people should have preferred Jackson to Clay is to many extraordinary. It is no more reasonable to worry over this problem than many others. Daniel Webster was intellectually one of the most richly endowed men in the country, yet he never came within measurable distance of a nomination at a national convention. East of the Alleghanies in 1860 the nomination of Seward by the Republican party seemed assured, and great was the chagrin when Lincoln was preferred before him. Such examples might be multiplied.

Henry Clay lacked one essential of political leadership,—fixity of mind. This is no railing accusation against him: it may have been one of his greatest virtues. The fact remains that in politics as in war, continuity of purpose, and absolute inflexibility of will, are more apt to win than changes of front to meet shifting conditions. It does not do to try to qualify former positions. Clay never in his heart believed that he was "trimming" on any subject. There was in him simply an inherent defect that led to misapprehensions in others. It has been charged that he was more anxious to succeed than be right, that he loved the praise of men more than that of his own conscience. His whole career, rightly understood, negatives any such assumption, no matter

how far a few incidents may seem to confirm it. As a youth he braved public opinion, and he continued to do so all his life. Indeed, he did so when there seemed no occasion to do it. He was so imperious that at times he took positions which grieved his friends, and in no wise appeased his enemies.

Clay was not really intended to be the leader of a congeries of republics such as composes our nation. If this had been a single democracy, there is no doubt that he could easily have become its head, almost its dictator. Leadership in our nation is different from that in any other that ever existed. It has been said that this nation is an experiment. It is more than that; it is an original creation. From the Achæan League to the present there have been many forms of government, but never one exactly like that of the United States. It has in some respects the rigidity of an empire, and in others all the flexibility of the loose federation of Greek states. Its strength has often been its weakness; its defects have often been its salvation. It is a complicated arrangement, though simple in its outline.

Under such circumstances successful leadership has come often to those who have been mere instrumentalities in the hands of others; occasionally to men of rugged force who have captured the multitude. The Presidency of the nation is a goal worth the ambition of any man, but it would be wrong to say that it is the test of the highest greatness. There have been men of relatively small caliber chosen to the chief magistracy, while many who have been most worthy of its honors have failed to gain them. Men like Clay and Blaine and Tilden have come close to victory, no more; others, like Polk and Pierce, have won the honor, but their elevation has been truly surprising.

If Clay had not been an extraordinary man, some of his lapses from the modern standard would have a tendency to lower him in popular esteem. In fact he was a man of his times, great in ambition, great in mind, great in soul, great in his errors. That he was human in his failings is not denied, but his environment, the standards of his age, must not be forgotten in gauging these. That he was at times indulgent to himself cannot be denied, but that, at far past seventy, he was the leader of the greatest deliberative assembly that ever sat in America ought to be a sufficient answer to those who assert that he was grossly dissipated.

The crowning test of character is the attitude of a man towards his fellow men. Clay was an ardent student of the Scriptures all his life, and the parable of the sheep and the goats made a great impression upon him. In that assumed narrative of the Judgment Day the view taken of human conduct seems to have been largely an objective one. Clay never failed in so far as within him lay to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or to visit those in prison, where he so often opened the bars. He was not only positive in his mental attitude towards humanity, but he never failed to respond to any application made to him. When the haughty of Kentucky looked on the slaves as mere chattels, Clay defended the slave without hesitation and without compensation. When influential men were accused, and most attorneys declined to appear against them, Clay was on fire to secure justice for the oppressed. When equivocation might have helped him he was inflexible. These positive qualities are such as men admire even when they do not practise them themselves.

If a trial balance be made of Clay by rules of

political book-keeping, it might be possible to show that his errors and failures outweighed his successes. But who would enter upon such a task? Clay has been dead long enough to be judged in a larger way.

No such personal force as Clay existed in the first half of our history. Washington was worshipped, but almost entirely from afar. Jefferson was largely the embodiment of a reaction. Clay was the first statesman in this country who really came deep into the affections of the American people. Every one of his admirers looked upon him as his best friend, and his defeats were in the nature of personal bereavements. He first taught the real democracy,—not the mob nor the few,—but the real thinking middle classes, to ponder on public questions and reason for themselves. His seed was sown on good ground, and in time it brought forth more than an hundred fold, though he unfortunately could not live to witness the triumph of his cherished principles.

If Henry Clay had been alive in 1861 he would have been as staunch for the Union as he was in 1812, and his persuasive argument and glorification of the blessings of the Union would have been no less potent than the Miltonian tones of Webster. It was Clay who, more than any other man up to the time of his death, helped to erase from the map those arbitrary lines which divided the nation into republics of partial independence. Webster was an apostle ; Clay was a founder. Clay constantly feared that the Union might be broken up, but never in all his career did he give sanction to anything which would provoke this. While Webster talked, Clay worked. At times he may have been over-anxious or have used the wrong methods, and in the end

encouraged the secessionists rather than repressed them ; but no man can read his speeches and letters from the first time he appeared on the cart-tail in Lexington to his last utterance before the Legislature at Frankfort more than fifty years later, without feeling that in him was bound up confidence in the Union, and that many of its hopes were centred in him. When the hour of trial came none of those who thought that the situation called for secession dared to invoke the name of Henry Clay.

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